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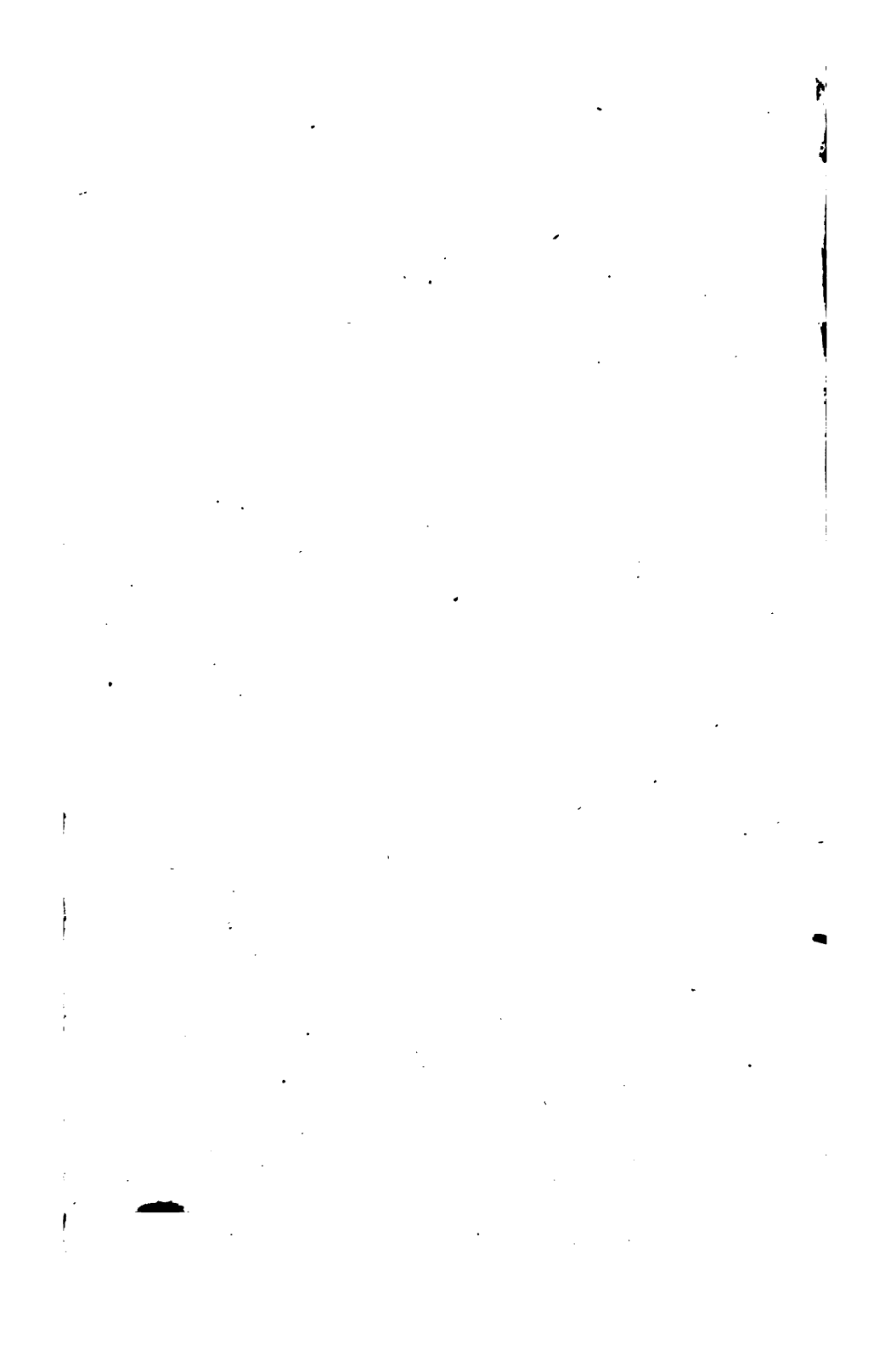
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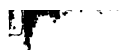


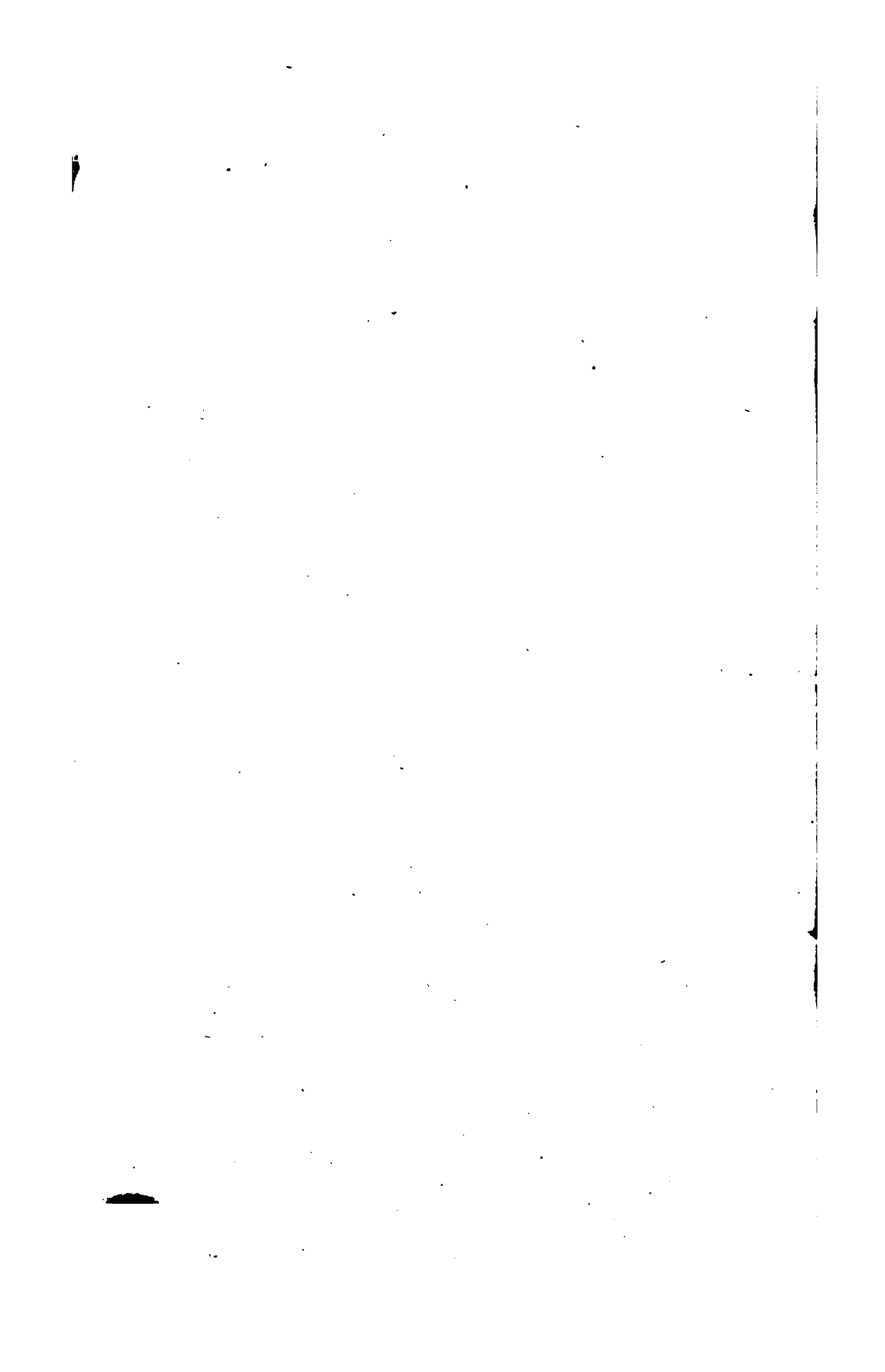
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Paul Willard Jr

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THE RECLAIMED

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VOL. II.

WILLIAM BROWN, PRINTER.

THE
MAN OF HONOUR,

AND

THE RECLAIMED.

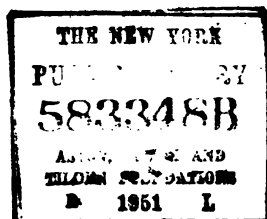
IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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1836.

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THE RECLAIMED

(CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER V.

If there be any good thing to be done,
That may to thee do ease, and grace to me,
Speak to me.

HAMLET.

THE season was now so far advanced that it became a matter of necessity to think of moving from Rome, where the malaria would shortly begin its annual visitation. Almost all the society, with the exception of the Ashmont and Graham families, had dispersed, some to Lucca, some to Castellamare, some to Florence, Como, or Pisa. It now became a subject of debate which should be the destiny of the Grahams. Alice was passive. So was Mr. Graham; Julia, therefore, was called upon to decide. Having been absent from England two or three years, she thought she could not do better than conduct her father and sister back to their native land. Graham

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Court had, she said, been so long untenanted by them, it was to be feared they would acquire the name of absentees. It was quite wrong to neglect one's own estate for so great a lapse of time; in short, it was so obvious that Graham Court was the only place where they ought to be, that it was astonishing they should have been so long blind to the propriety of going there. The English of this was, that Julia had grown tired of the continental life, and longed to taste again the pleasures of a London season. Graham Court was accordingly made the pretext, and to England it was decided they should immediately go. It was further arranged that they should only remain two or three days in London, and then proceed to the family estate, where their presence was so much needed.

So many travels, diaries, tours, are extant—so well versed is every one in the well-trodden roads between Rome and Calais—that I shall spare my readers all details of how the travellers were annoyed by gibbing horses, delighted by beautiful scenery, plagued with slow *bœvi* in the Appennines, dirty inns planted in enchanting country, cut-throat looking postillions, and squalid beggars; how their thoughts were occasionally occupied, and their alarm excited by fires glimmering in woods which skirted the road; and at dusk how their tempers were ruffled by long stoppages on the road, (when they were particularly anxious to arrive at a given place by day-light,) in order that the postillions of the two carriages might hold interminable

conversations with one another, totally irrelevant to the horses, carriages, roads, or any one thing that postillions may or ought to talk about when they are driving travellers.

I cannot, however, help recording an incident, which gave rise to one of these aforesaid conversations. The postillion of one carriage seeing an unsuspecting hen pecking what she could by the wayside, jumped off his horse without stopping the carriage, and in the twinkling of an eye caught up the hen, stuffed her, bodily, into his hat,* which he again clapped on his head, and resumed his seat on horseback with as much agility as he had left it, and trotted up to his companion with a smile of exultation and delight upon his face, screaming to him as soon as he was within hearing, to listen to his story; and chuckling and laughing at his feat, with all the delight that an Oxford young gentleman, I am told, feels when he has succeeded in wrenching off a knocker from some maiden lady's door, and has deposited it in a trunk, where there are already lying ensconced five hundred relics of the same kind,—all equally precious,—such as gilt-fish, Saracen's-Heads, wooden highlanders, and painted cheeses.

At the end of the usual period for the performance of such a journey as the one described, the travellers arrived at Mr. Graham's house in London. The

* Fact.

season was at its height, for June was just beginning, and the usual madness prevailed. The ladies passed their evenings in the park, their midnights at routs, their mornings at balls. Every one said they had no peace, there was so much to do each night; every one affirmed they longed to get out of town, they had been there since November; but no one staid at home any night in the week; no one thought or dreamt of stirring from London, though their gardens in the country were in the greatest beauty, and the one thing on earth, they to a woman cared about, was a garden. Such is the amazing restraint people are in the habit of imposing upon their inclinations!

It was so long since Alice had been in the turmoil of a London life, that she felt quite bewildered, and soon began to regret the agreeable and quiet routine of society they had enjoyed at Rome. There, the society was limited to twenty people; here she found herself surrounded by five hundred dear friends and near relations, engaged ten deep to dinners, water parties, rides to Dulwich, rides to Greenwich, rides to Putney. In short, her amusements became at length so toilsome and so fatiguing, that she began to long to quarrel with every body, go no where, and do nothing; in short, to be allowed to "*s'ennuyer à son aise*."

Almack's too had a share in her amusements, if the time she passed there may be called by that name. She went more for the sake of pleasing her father, who was under the necessity of acting chaperon to

Julia, than for any gratification of her own ; and Julia did not in the least participate in Alice's distaste for the labours of the great world. The few days they were to have passed in London had long elapsed, but still there was no question of moving. Indeed, it may be supposed that the dreaded name of absentee had lost its terrors, or that the sin of neglecting the seat of our ancestors had become venial in Julia's eyes, so loth was she to resign the pleasures of the metropolis, for the quiet and (to some) dull routine of a country life.

They had passed about three weeks in London, when one morning the following conversation took place between Julia and her father, at breakfast ; that is Julia's breakfast, for Mr. Graham's appetite was too impatient to fall exactly into a young lady's London hours.

" July, my dear, Saunders tells me the coach must go to the coachmaker's."

" Where, papa ?"

" I do not know exactly, my dear, but somewhere in Long Acre, a good way off. Near the play-houses, my dear. I remember you took me there once to see your cousin's new chariot, when she was going to be married."

" Oh, yes, I know," replied Julia, peevishly, " all the coachmakers live there ; but, why ? I mean—I am sure the coach does mighty well—and Saunders only wants to run up a long bill at Hobson's !"

"Yes, my dear, *that* is the name—Hobson—how clever you are, you always recollect so well!"

"But why, papa?—what does Saunders make out that the coach can possibly want?"

"Why, my dear, to have the dickies, and the trunks, and imperials, set to rights before our journey."

"Journey, papa! what journey?"

"Why, to Graham Court, love—are we not going to Graham Court?"

"Oh, but we have not settled anything about that yet, you know, papa."

"No, really, my love, haven't we? I thought we had come all the way from Rome to go there?"

"Yes, papa, when other people go to the country, of course—but I don't suppose you would wish to go, just when London is most pleasant."

"Oh!" in his turn rejoined Mr. Graham. "Why, my dear, I don't remember your saying anything about London, at Rome, my dear."

"You know, my dear papa, your memory is none of the best. I am sure I must have mentioned it, and if I did not, there is no reason one should put oneself out of one's way."

"Certainly not, my dear, I am sure; and if you like London so much—only my old bailiff writes to me, that he wants me sadly. I forget what he says—but I have his letter in my pocket—just read it, July—you will see what he wants."

"Oh, pray do not bore me with his interminable

rigmaroles. What can he care whether he sees you now, or in August?"

"In August; July?" said Mr. Graham, somewhat astonished; "well if you really like London so much—"

"Who told you that *I* liked London, papa—it is much more upon Alice's account."

"Alice, my dear! Why surely you were complaining to me only yesterday, that you could not get her to (what was it you said) take an interest (that was the word, July; you always express yourself so well), an interest in anything—balls, I mean, and that sort of thing, and you could not get her to write to Lady — for an Almack's ticket, and had to go by yourself."

"I wish you would not quote my expressions, papa; you have such a memory for things which don't signify. Alice's dislike to going out, is the very thing which makes me wish to keep her in London. I am sure it is the only thing to put that nonsense about Arthur Ashmont out of her head; if it had not been for that, I am sure *I* should be too happy to go to Graham Court to-morrow, though I must say that the country is always odious in spring, (in England I mean,) and I dare say the breakfasts at Chiswick will begin soon."

"Why, my dear, is not Chiswick in the country?"

"Lord, papa," sighed out Julia, "exhausted by her father's incorrigible matter-of-fact mode of viewing things"—then recovering herself—"No, papa, Chis-

wick is not in the country. What people of common sense, who live in the world, call (the) country. In short, papa, you had better tell Saunders not to trouble himself about the coach at present."

"Well, my dear, it is just as you please; but I certainly thought Chiswick was in the country; I am sure I remember something about cedars and hot-houses, and a great deal of dust on the road, going there once. However, I will tell Saunders what you bid me."

"Do, papa, and remember you must be home from your club in time to take us to — House to-night, or at least me, for I am not sure that Alice means to go, or whether more than one of us is asked."

Whatever might have been Alice's opinion upon the subject of a London life, there is, nevertheless, a certain portion of amusement to be derived from it, as indeed there is from most things not positively irksome, if we will but give ourselves the trouble to find it out. In the days of my youth, I, like Julia, was a frequenter of Almack's ball. I derived a certain portion of amusement, as I walked upstairs behind young gentlemen just emerged from a hackney coach, and saw them arranging their *coup de vents*, adjusting their coats, so as to fit in their waists, that no truant fold should injure the symmetry of their figures. I also derived some a little higher up; when, on the landing-place I found pretty girls, their mothers carefully hiding any part of the petticoat, or rather intruder, which

dared surpass the limits prescribed by the nicely trimmed gown on their white shoulders. On one occasion I went to the ball, not very well, and having therefore no intention of dancing, but meaning to glean amusement from the conversation of those around me, and in my turn by conversing myself. I must, however, confess now, that I have this many a long year forsworn balls, that I was most anxious to proclaim my sedentary inclination, lest I should earn that fearful nick-name of "wall-flower," a name saddled upon unfortunate females, because young gentlemen who ought to dance, arrive with canes,* play at *écarté*, flirt with married ladies, in short to do any thing but what a young man ought to do at a ball, viz. dance. However, for whatever cause, the name is a bugbear to the fair. At a ball, the object in view with young persons of our sex, is not the pleasure of dancing, but that every one should say what innumerable partners Miss — has! She must be a very popular girl. I never see her sitting down!"

On the occasion in question, I say, I was somewhat diverted with the conversation of the two persons on the bench below me. But here, reader, I forewarn you, that what I am going to say, has nothing whatever to do with Ashmont, Graham, or any other individual; it merely is to exemplify the conversation

* I need not tell the conversant in fashionable life, that canes are a sign that a man does not dance.

that passes at a ball, and if you do not relish being interrupted in the thread of the story, such as it is, skip a page or two. As for me, I will write it, because it may suit the fancy of some readers, and it is an amusement to me to do so.

The colloquists were a gentleman and young lady. The former began—"So I hear you do not mean to dance to-night. How comes that?"

"I am not very well, and do not wish to tire myself."

"I am sorry for it. I meant to have asked you to dance with me."

"It is very unlucky that you should have pitched upon the only night that I have been unable to dance this year. However, I am not sorry to sit still, as it diverts me to hear the conversation of those that surround me."

"You are a person of singular taste. I believe you would prefer at any time sitting silently listening to two great men talking over the affairs of the nation, or two blues, cogitating over geology, ornithology, or some other ology, to talking to some one of your own standing."

"I do not see that there is any thing very extraordinary in that."

"Why, most girls like to talk to the young men, and are wretched if they have not this resource at their beck."

"You should not say that to me: you know I ought

to take up the cudgels for my own sex, and prove incontestably that your's is the very last thing we ever think of. However, that would entail upon me so very long a disquisition, that I will not attempt it. You must acknowledge that hearing two great men, as you call them, talking about something worth hearing, is much more agreeable than the common routine of ball conversation with which you young gentlemen are so good as to favour us. Besides, I am so tired of the old story, 'Did you ever see such a quix as Mrs. — is to night? I declare it surpasses every thing I ever saw. Just look at her, now do I' and then an individual, perhaps, is pointed out with a hat and feathers, all going different ways; some to the detriment of her vision, some to that of her neighbours, some unavoidably inducing a tickling sensation, which those only who are laudable enough to '*souffrir pour être belle*,' have strength of mind to endure. Be it as it may, I cannot own to caring a straw how Mrs. — looks, and when I am addressed in that tone, lamentably often fail in discovering any thing worth the trouble of looking for."

Such is frequently the description of conversation that passes at balls, thus pointless and devoid of interest. But though this is a specimen, I must confess that the last remark of the young lady is one that I have made internally many a time myself, — which coincidence probably caused me to remember it so accurately. How often have I at a theatre been im-

portuned by my companion to look at some object which had caught his eye, either for the singularity of its attire, or its resemblance to a friend, in the middle of the pit below, or perched in the boxes above us, and been plagued for an hour with directions how and where to look, and been made to count the nineteenth person in the twelfth row, in order to see something. I had not the smallest desire to behold, and at a time when I had much rather have looked on the stage, or the play-bill, or at any rate sat quiet.

It requires something very much above par, either in the way of beauty or singularity, (ugliness will do, if to excess) to make it worth a person's while to strain his eyes to penetrate to the utmost verge of a theatre or ball-room, at the suggestion of his companion.

My digression is now over, reader, and I return to my story. The London season did, this year, like every other, draw to a close, and even Julia began to think they might as well take their departure for Graham Court, and to Graham Court accordingly they went.

It may be asked how I could have allowed my hero and heroine to be so long together in the same town, and yet have made no mention of the former. The fact is, that the intercourse which took place between them, was of so ordinary a description, so entirely devoid of quarrels, mysterious conversations, huffs, in short all things worthy of a novel, that I have not

dared to introduce it. They met often in the most common place and rational manner. They as often talked over their mutual prospects, and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of Arthur's going to India. After having well weighed the matter, it was finally decided that he should join his uncle there, provided he procured his father's consent, and that his departure should be delayed only until that permission was obtained. His uncle enjoyed a lucrative situation in the East-Indies, and had often invited his nephew to visit him there, holding out, that in such case, he might probably make the young man his heir. The old gentleman, however, was a sort of person on whose words no great dependence could be placed, and his intention of to-day, might vanish with to-morrow's sun. Arthur's main hope therefore rested more on his powers of realizing something in the position his uncle should think fit to place him, than on that uncle's good intentions in his favour.

Such was the state of affairs between them when Alice left London. Arthur's letter to his family was already despatched; he felt little doubt that their consent would be obtained, and in that conviction the lovers took leave of each other, with the probability, nay, almost the certainty, of being widely separated for many a long year.

It may be imagined, that with no great feeling of exhilaration did poor Alice return to the home from which she had been so long absent. There were other

sources of sorrow here too. She had not been at Graham Court since her mother's death; every thing there reminded her so forcibly of the loved being she had lost, that the sensation on arriving was one of unmitigated pain. Her mother was in every part of it. The garden, the well-known beds, the shape and planting of which they had so often discussed together; the flowers that Alice had put in with her own hand under her mother's direction; the seat where she used to sit, enjoying the air and sunshine without incurring fatigue; the very chair in the drawing-room which she was wont to occupy, her work table, every thing she saw brought back to her mind the image of her mother with a vividness that well nigh overcame her. Her father and sister were not unmoved at the sight of all this, and the first evening of their arrival was consequently a silent and a melancholy one. All were glad to seek the solitude of their own room, and there to give way for a while to those feelings of sorrow and sadness which each thought it an imperative duty to control in the presence of the other.

Thank God! the greatest grief we can experience has a limit. It may and does subdue the mind, and in some it works a complete change; but in none is the impression of so lasting a nature as to render the remainder of a life miserable to its possessor.

In process of time the inmates of Graham Court became accustomed to the melancholy recollections which gathered around them, and to resume, by de-

grees, those habits which a long residence on the continent had considerably broken through. The society of the neighbourhood was limited. The only family with whom they had lived in intimacy was that of Mrs. Shenstone, a lady of good property and old family. When the Grahams left England for the continent, Mrs. Shenstone's family party consisted of herself and two daughters. She had also a son; but this young gentleman being what is termed a "wild youth" (in other words, one who never attempted to place the slightest restraint, moral or religious, upon his passions and inclinations), had, at the age of sixteen, been sent to sea as a hopeless case. Her two daughters in the interval had been advantageously married; but the young man, after a lapse of ten years, had returned to his family much altered, and was now living with his mother, and apparently endeavouring, by the practice of every virtue, by the most dutiful and affectionate behaviour at home, and by good conduct and propriety abroad, to induce those who had known him, to forget that he had ever been the scamp, who, for his incorrigible wickedness, had been ten years before driven from his home.

With this small family the Grahams passed a great portion of their time; living at a distance of barely two miles, Mrs. Shenstone's house was a constant walk or ride of Alice's. Mrs. Graham had been very intimate with their neighbour, and her society had, perhaps, for that reason, a peculiar charm for Alice.

The attention and kindness of manner evinced by George Shenstone towards his mother, seemed to betoken so great an alteration in the character of that young man, that Alice could hardly believe him to be the same person whose misconduct she had so often heard deplored, and whose character she had understood to have been so great a source of uneasiness to his mother. On a maturer acquaintance it was evident that a deep shade of melancholy had, for some cause or other, overspread the disposition of the young man; he scarcely ever smiled, and it seemed a painful effort to him to enter into any gaiety which might be proposed, or which in conversation should occur. But withal, it was plain that this did not proceed from any fault of temper, or moroseness of character; he was invariably kind and gentle to every one, and his most anxious desire seemed to be—no matter by what measure of self-denial—to promote the comfort and happiness of every one around him. Alice saw all this, and began to feel in the young man a degree of interest, which, had not her heart been previously given to another, might have ripened into a warmer feeling.

With respect to George Shenstone the case was different. There existed no prepossession in his case, to prevent his being very forcibly attracted by the charms of Alice, and when their intercourse had subsisted a few weeks, there were evident signs that on his side he cherished a deep though hitherto silent

attachment for Alice. In all respects he would have been a most eligible match for her. Already in possession of his father's estate, and heir to a considerable fortune brought into the family by his mother, there was no apparent reason to prevent him from urging a suit which, in a worldly point of view, was still more desirable for Alice than himself. But months and months passed away without his approaching to anything like of a declaration. His attachment was discoverable in a thousand ways, impossible to be described; but he seemed to stand in a sort of awe of Alice, and when accidentally they were left together, there was, in his deportment towards her, a hanging back, as though there were some insurmountable obstacle against his ever being more to her than he was at present. For some time Alice attributed this to the discouragement she, of course, gave to any advances on his part; but as their acquaintance and intimacy increased, she thought she discerned that there was some other feeling mixed up with this one—that her discouragement of him was taken as a matter of course, and that there existed in his mind some hidden motive for the peculiarity of his conduct towards her. The invariable sadness which possessed him excited both her compassion and interest in a high degree, and she was at a loss to conceive the cause of this so unusual degree of melancholy—in one too, whose character she was told had once been so different; who, ten years before, had left his home gay,

reckless, unprincipled, and, in short, the very reverse of what he now appeared. Had he experienced some great misfortune? Did some secret sorrow prey upon his mind? In the hope that by kindness and consolation she might be enabled to alleviate his sorrows, she determined, if possible, to induce him to unburthen his mind to her.

But aware as she was of the state of his feelings towards her, it was imperative that he should be apprized how she was circumstanced with regard to her engagement, in order that no advances on her part to induce him to disclose his secret, should be considered by him as any encouragement, or even sanction of the address he appeared disposed to pay her. The most feasible manner of acquainting George with what she wished him to know, was through the medium of his mother. She, simple soul! had never suspected or seen any attachment in her son to Alice, and was too much gratified with the change wrought in his character, to trouble herself much about his "fits of absence," as she used to call them.

"George is not in very good spirits to-day," she would say to Alice, and then propose a little snap-dragon to enliven him, or invite five or six of the country neighbours to dinner, hinting to them, before the young man, that they must make themselves, if possible, more than usually agreeable, (i. e. talk yet more of cross roads, parish grievances, and poaching delinquencies) "as a certain person who should be

nameless (with a wink) was a little afflicted with the green devils on that day, and to them alone she trusted for dispelling these troublesome, though pretty-coloured intruders." (It was a peculiarity of phrase with Mrs. Shenstone, that those beings, which by others are generally designated *blue devils*, were by her invariably termed *green*, for what reason is not easy to say.)

It was a very easy matter for Alice to take an opportunity of telling Mrs. Shenstone the history of her engagement; and knowing the good lady never concealed aught from her son, but, on the contrary, treasured up every little anecdote and every piece of scandal she heard, to amuse him with at the breakfast or dinner-table Alice, felt secure that the next time she saw George, he would be no stranger to the state of the case, and that any attempt she might make to gain his confidence, would not be liable to misconstruction on his part.

She was not wrong. The next morning Mrs. Shenstone, delighted at having so interesting a piece of intelligence to relate, thus began :

"George, I have a piece of news for you."

"Have you indeed, what is it mother?"

"Oh, I assure you it is quite interesting, and I do not think you would ever guess it. Will you try?"

"I had rather you would tell it me, mother, if you have no objection. What is it?"

"Why Alice Graham has been this year past engaged to be married!"

"What?" said George, quickly. Mrs. Shenstone repeated what she had said.

George was silent. Mrs. Shenstone looked up. George was leaning back in an arm-chair, his eyes fixed upon the fire.

"Well, but you do not seem surprised! You have not got the *greens* to-day, my dear boy, have you?"

"Who is she engaged to?" said he at length, without regarding his mother's question.

"To Mr. Ashmont, Sir John Ashmont's youngest son, who has nothing, and is gone to India to try and bring back an income; which he will not do, I will venture to say. It is a wretched match for her. Ah, what a wife she would have been for you, George! What a pity that you did not marry her!"

"Marry *her*!" said George. "*I* marry *her*! Mother; she could never be induced to marry such a one as *me*."

"Such as you, indeed!—and why not? You are the best match in the county, and though I say it that should not, the best young man too, and she will be a lucky woman who marries you."

"Mother, I never can marry. Do not speak of it. Once the idea crossed my mind, that if Alice could be brought to accept me as a husband, Heaven itself could hardly have greater charms for me than this world with her—but, it never could be, never!"

George was much affected, and struggled hard to conceal his emotion. Mrs. Shenstone, who thought it was all nonsense, and that her son was a vast deal too modest, said so two or three times; but no effort of her's could induce George to resume the conversation, and they soon after separated for the morning.

It was some days after this passed, before Alice saw George again. Pleading business in London, he was absent from his residence for a week or ten days. At the end of that period he returned to the country, and the usual intercourse with the Graham family was renewed. His melancholy was still undiminished, and a nice observer might, perhaps, perceive that it had become yet a shade deeper. But Alice was still bent upon endeavouring to lighten his burthen, by becoming the depositary of his sorrows. She pitied and admired him so much, that she was loth to leave any stone unturned to render him, if possible, a happier mortal than he appeared to be. But the question was, how to induce him to disclose his secret. She could scarcely with propriety make such a suggestion, without a direct encouragement from him to do so.

In early life George Shenstone had been a great traveller. It was understood that America had been the scene of his wanderings during the greater part of his absence from home. Alice often endeavoured to induce him to give her an account of his sojourn in a country of which there is much that is curious and interesting to be known, but he evinced an unsur-

mountable dislike to the topic, and whenever a desire was intimated to hear from him the particulars of his travels, he generally contrived to turn the conversation, and never yet had satisfied the curiosity either of his mother or friends upon the subject. His distaste was so marked, that Alice began to suspect his melancholy was connected with some event which had occurred during his residence in those countries, and she determined to endeavour, through that channel, to arrive at the object she was in search of. An opportunity soon occurred.

Alice was in the habit of taking daily rides, more for her health than her pleasure, for she had no inclination for this mode of passing her time; and, as generally speaking, her ride was solitary, this dislike is hardly to be wondered at. Sometimes, however, she was joined by George Shenstone, and on those occasions, it is probable that the ride was not so entirely a source of unmitigated ennui.

One day she had set out for a long expedition to a neighbouring town, when she was overtaken on her road by George, who, saying he was on his way to the same place, for the purpose of attending the Quarter Sessions, begged permission to accompany her. Now was the time, thought Alice, to gain his confidence. A ride of seven or eight miles; the certainty of a *tête-à-tête*, and a fine day, which last advantage by the bye, was no small one, for it gave the facility of riding slowly—to persons engaged in interesting

converse, a *sine qua non*. Such favorable circumstances combining were not to be thrown away.

Their way lay through a heathy country, wild and studded here and there with a few trees. "This country puts me a little in mind of North America," said George, "though it is yet far less desolate than the part of it which I have visited."

This was the first time he had ever mentioned that region of the world, where he had passed the earliest years of his manhood.

"I am glad," said Alice, "to hear you mention a country of which I have often longed to hear more. You are one of the few people who have visited the North-West Coast of America, and yet, though I have known you, I may say, almost intimately for eight or nine months, I have never yet been able to persuade you to communicate some of the knowledge you must have gained in that country. Now you have yourself started the subject, I am determined I will not let you off. Now do, Mr. Shenstone," said she, smiling as she spoke, "tell me a little of your history during the time you passed in those remote regions. I am sure you must have numerous interesting and curious particulars to relate."

George's cheek was pale as he listened to this appeal. He spoke with effort when he replied: "There is so much that is painful in my history, Miss Graham, that I should be sorry to inflict any part of it on you, from whom I have never experienced aught but kindness."

"Far be it from me, Mr. Shenstone," answered Alice, "to pry into your secrets, or to wish to draw from you any thing you may be desirous of concealing; but surely, without indiscretion, may I not ask you to tell me something of the country you have visited, and the people who inhabit it; for I am right, am I not, when I say it is a part of the world little known, and still less described?"

George was still silent. Alice resumed with great gentleness, and more seriousness of manner.

"And may I yet say one thing more? might it not be some satisfaction to you to speak on matters which, you must allow me to say so, for I have long seen that it is so, hang heavily upon your mind and spirits? Why not permit a friend to share the burthen with you, instead of locking up in your own breast alone, that which I am convinced it would afford you relief to disclose? I am aware that I have little, *no* right, to press you upon such a subject; but warm interest—an ever recurring regret for the depression you habitually labour under—must plead my excuse for so uncalled-for an intrusion."

"Miss Graham," answered George, unheeding the latter part of her address, "I have no friend upon whom I should consider myself justified in inflicting my own history. I left England before I had had time to make a friend; and then, indeed, who would have been my friend! Oh, Miss Graham! you little know the wretch I was then! the wretch I have been since!

the weight of guilt and misery that lies upon my heart ! If I were to tell you what has befallen me in times, now, thank God ! long gone by, you would shun me. I should lose the only friend I have on earth, my poor mother excepted ; and that would, indeed, be more than I could bear !”

Alice was deeply affected at the earnestness of his manner, and at the deep despondency with which he spoke.

“ If, indeed, Mr. Shenstone,” said she, “ you consider me in the light of a friend, and I am happy that you do so, why not give me the privilege, as well as the title, of friend ; why not let me be that friend to share the burthen which I have long seen oppresses you so sorely ?”

“ Miss Graham,” answered George, “ your kindness overwhelms me ; and yet I dare not profit by your offer. I repeat it ! the knowledge of what I am would lose me the only enjoyment I possess—your friendship and good opinion ; and, oh God ! that would indeed be more than I could endure. Miss Graham, I have fervently loved you ; you must have seen it, though the folly, the madness, of such a one as I am, daring to—to—even to wish to excite a reciprocal feeling in your breast was ever present to my mind ; yet in my presumption I have loved you—do love you still with ardent love ! Nay, interrupt me not, I will not insult you by proffering a suit I know you must reject with scorn. I never should have named it to you, but I am hardly

master of myself now. I thought I had sufficiently schooled my mind to enable me to avoid all this. Forgive me, Miss Graham, if I have distressed you."

He stopped abruptly; and Alice was for a moment at a loss for a reply. At length, without alluding to the declaration he had just made her, she said,

"Mr. Shenstone, I am indeed distressed to see you thus; and the more so, that though you so greatly need it, you refuse that comfort and consolation which is to be found in pouring out our sorrows into the bosom of another. You say," continued she, "that you would lose my friendship and good opinion were you to do so. Is an opinion founded on evident worth and excellence so easily forfeited? Forfeited by the disclosure perhaps of some youthful follies long since repented of and abandoned. Can I cease to respect you, when I see you fulfilling the duties of a son and of a master with scrupulous exactitude, making yourself beloved by all with whom you come in contact; when I have the certainty that you employ your time and thoughts in promoting the happiness of those around you, no matter at what expense of personal comfort or convenience? Are all these evidences of tangible excellencies to vanish at a tale of events long gone by; and when, as I understand, you were a very different person from what you now are known to be? Would this be just? would this be reasonable?"

George was still silent, but seemed to listen to her

words with avidity ; and, by the increasing brightness of his eye, to derive some little comfort from them.

"And do you really think this?" said he, at length. "Is it possible that a knowledge of what I have to tell would not make you shun me? And yet, your pure mind cannot form an idea of the wickedness I have been guilty of! Miss Graham, delude me not into the disclosure of my secret, and then cast me off for ever! I have deeply, grievously repented in dust and ashes; and if their were any expiation here below, any atonement valid which we could make, my sufferings might have constituted that atonement, for I have not known a moment's peace since I came to a knowledge of that black mass of enormity—myself!"

"However great your crimes may have been, it is not for me, Mr. Shenstone, to judge them. I can only pity you for what you may have gone through; and admire what I see you now perform. And if, indeed, you think that the imparting your secret will be a comfort to you, let not any apprehension of harshness, or unkindness on my part, deter you. You have suffered so much already, that I should be a brute, indeed to heap any additional misery on you at the disclosure I may myself have induced you to make—solely and entirely, believe me, in the hope that such a disclosure may promote your comfort,—not with the intention more deeply to probe your wounds."

George was greatly moved.

"Yes," he said, at length, "to pour out my sorrows into your bosom, to unburthen myself to you, will indeed be a comfort. You alone shall know my history. Oh, there is a happiness even in the thought, that I shall have nothing hidden from you, that you have allowed me to treat you with a confidence I have never extended to another. But I cannot tell you now; I will write. I could not tell you all you ought to know. The going over those scenes again would be too painful to me! I will write. God bless you, Miss Graham. Thanks, thanks, for your kindness. It will never be forgotten!"

And taking her hand for a moment in his, he let it drop; then turning his horse, he rode off in the homeward direction, the Quarter Sessions, and his business in the country town, at which they were on the point of arrival, having quite slipped his memory.

CHAPTER VI.

I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand on end.

HAMLET.

THE singular conversation just related, and the probable result of it, afforded Alice ample matter for

reflection on her road homeward. It was a relief that George had left her, and that she found herself at liberty to think over all that had passed between them. How singular was their footing together! The young man had been betrayed, it might almost be said, into a declaration of love, but under such circumstances as to make a reply from herself unnecessary. Of this same young man she was now, nevertheless, the confidante and only friend. She was surprised at herself for feeling no embarrassment in her intercourse with him, knowing, as she did, the state of his feelings towards her; and even now, when he had explained himself in plain terms, the whole transaction seemed so much a matter of course, and a consequence of what she already knew to be the case, that it left scarcely any impression upon her mind. Not so the conversation which had given rise to this declaration, nor the result which was likely to ensue. Her curiosity (a failing sometimes unjustly attributed exclusively to our sex) was, it must be confessed, most forcibly awakened. What could he have done in America, which should excite such deep remorse, such lasting melancholy? She ran over a catalogue of crimes in her mind, but all were rejected as impossible to have been perpetrated by so admirable a person as George Shenstone. In short, she was lost in a sea of conjecture, with occasionally a degree of dread of what she had yet to learn. In this state of suspense, two days elapsed, which she conceived

to have been devoted by him to the preparation of the paper, through the medium of which she was to be made acquainted with her friend's history. In the course of these two days, she saw Mrs. Shenstone, but George did not appear. The old lady told her he had been busily employed ever since his return from the county town; but of his occupation she had not inquired. Alice needed no further information, to apprise her of the nature of his occupation. Accordingly, on the evening of the second day, a thick packet was delivered to her, as the family were sitting in the drawing-room, after dinner.

"You seem to have got a most voluminous correspondence, Alice," said Julia, eyeing the packet; "if not impertinent, may I ask the author of that most lengthy epistle?"

"It is from Shenstone House," said Alice.

"Oh, the directions Mrs. Shenstone promised about the poor people in R—— Parish, I suppose. Well, they must be more numerous than I hoped, if their respective wants alone form the subject of that thick letter."

Conceiving herself bound to secrecy with respect to all that had passed between herself and George, though nothing specific on that head had been stipulated by the latter, Alice was glad to find Julia had, of her own accord, accounted for the arrival of this unusually thick packet. Making no further answer to the remark, she took as early an opportunity as was

decent, to retire to her own room, there to peruse the contents of the letter. It must be confessed, that during the hour she had passed in the drawing-room, after the receipt of it, and before she could with any shadow of reason go to bed, she had been on the tenterhooks of expectation and curiosity; the packet, as is said of money, burning in her bag, to which receptacle she had reluctantly consigned it, after glancing over the first line or two, and looking at the signature. On an occasion like this, there is no alternative but patience. If we are in perfect health, and in the habit of going to bed at eleven o'clock, it is impossible to do so at nine, on the receipt of a thick letter, without the imminent risk of exciting suspicion of something unusual being in question. Alice thought, however, she might split the difference, and as soon as the clock struck ten, she lighted her candle, having but one remark of Julia's to parry, on the earliness of her hours. Once safe in her room, she opened the letter, which ran thus:—

“After all I said to you, Miss Graham, in the course of our ride, you must be aware that I have a tale to tell of guilt and misery,—but, alas! it is of guilt and misery far beyond any of which you can form an idea. Before I begin, you must allow me to remind you of your promise. These were your words:—‘If you think that the imparting your secret will be a comfort to you, let not any apprehension of harshness or unkindness on my part deter you. You have suf-

ferred so much already, that I should be a brute indeed to heap any additional misery upon you, in consequence of a disclosure I may have induced you to make.' On the faith of this, I make my confession. For though I know that I deserve even the punishment which a loss of your friendship would inflict, yet, oh, spare me this! I have already suffered much, very much—take pity upon a wretch that lives but for his mother's sake, and whose only ray of comfort in this life, is the enjoyment of your friendship, which, if withdrawn, would make it dark, dark indeed! But again I say it, I do rely on your word. I am sure that word once passed, will not be recalled. You will continue my friend, in consideration of what I am now, nor visit upon me the sins of which I have been guilty, but of which I have long since repented. You *will* do this, and in that confidence do I begin my tale.

"When I left England, you were yet a child. I see you now, a happy joyous child. Sixteen years old myself, I thought of you but as a plaything, when chance threw you in my way. This is irrelevant, but I have a degree of satisfaction in dwelling upon any part of my life in which you are in the slightest degree concerned. My education had not been neglected, but as an only son, I was taught to consider myself a first object, and, indeed, such I was. Full of faults, I had been sent to school, from the erroneous notion that those which a home-life had not succeeded

in eradicating, would yield to the severer discipline of a school. I was cunning, ill-tempered, and overbearing; but my father, who doated on me, was blind to my faults. When I displayed cunning, he thought I possessed a cleverness beyond my years; when I showed ill-temper, he deemed the circumstances such that no one could keep their temper, much less a high spirited boy like me; and when I domineered over the few companions I had an opportunity of associating with at home, or spoke imperiously to the servants, he excused it by saying that I was so superior to the former, it was natural I should have the upper hand; and with respect to the latter, there was no reason I should not acquire the habit of being waited upon, as I should always have a numerous retinue at my command. Such was the ruinous moral education I received. My mother, grieved at such a system, thought, and perhaps with some reason, that school might work a salutary change in me, and she prevailed upon my father to send me thither. But, however bad a home-education, such as I have described, may be, school is no place to correct such faults as mine. I returned for the holidays, wiser in Latin and Greek, and with all my faults in full force. My mother did what she could to correct me during my residence at home; but what could a woman do with a tall school-boy of twelve years old, encouraged by his father in every selfish folly, and with sisters who were directed to give way to me, and hu-

mour my every fancy and caprice? It must have, indeed, been a blessing to the family when the holidays expired, and I was sent back to school!

"When I had reached my fourteenth year, my father died. I was then sent to a public school, from whence in a year's time I was expelled by the master, for an offence which I need not weary you by particularizing. The next year was passed at home, and my dear mother, I must confess it, did every thing in her power by gentle means to curb the violence of my passions, and to root out those faults which, having been neglected or rather encouraged in childhood, had grown up into rank weeds, and rendered me odious and detestable to every one I had to do with.

"Finding her labours vain, with bitterness and sorrow of heart, she yielded to the advice of my guardian, and determined upon sending me to sea. The war was not at this period concluded, and though the struggle with France for the empire of the seas had long been over, yet England had not ceased to put forth her strength for the maintenance of that supremacy which she had asserted at Trafalgar. There was, therefore, no difficulty in procuring, even for such an ill-conditioned subject as myself, a midshipman's berth on board one of his Majesty's ships, and I speedily found myself domesticated in the cockpit of the Larkspur frigate. I found her at Spithead waiting anxiously for sailing orders, which she soon re-

ceived, but I was not destined to witness her departure. Among the officers on board was one, a lieutenant, distantly related to my mother, to whose good offices and such protection as circumstances would admit of I was earnestly recommended. I had been on board but a few days, hardly long enough even for me to display my impatience of control, much less to profit by the salutary influence of naval discipline, and that mutual instruction of the cockpit, so admirably calculated to curb tempers and dispositions like mine, when my destined protector invited me to dine at the lieutenants' mess. As a stranger and a guest, I was received by my superiors in rank, with a courtesy which formed a strong contrast to the boisterous familiarity of my proper associates. The feelings of the heir to property and station which had been hitherto somewhat checked by the rough practice of the cockpit, speedily resumed their influence, rising with each successive glass of fiery port, or sherry, to which I was condescendingly invited by my hosts. I became garrulous over much. I was indulged, pitied, tolerated for a time. My audience bore with my description of Shenstone Park. They even received in deep silence divers recitals of discreditable boyish freaks, which I foolishly thought would raise me in their estimation. At length correction became necessary, and it was administered, quite as leniently as I deserved, by the first lieutenant. With any one but myself, the rebuke would have taken timely effect. I

retorted. The first-lieutenant closed the banquet and the discussion, and ordered me to my berth. I penned him a challenge, and the next morning received from the captain a message, giving me the option of immediate and voluntary retirement from the service, or of submitting to a court martial, which my returning sense was just sufficient to inform me would infallibly lead to the same result. The afternoon of the following day saw me safely landed at the Point of Portsmouth, from which I made my way to the coffee-room of the inn at which I had lodged on my first arrival. I had there made a casual acquaintance with the captain and mate of a vessel fitted out on a trading speculation to North America, and who were waiting for an easterly wind with patience, sustained as well as might be by the execrable cheer of a Portsmouth coffee-room. My grandeur returned upon me, and I invited the party to feast at my expense, a proposal which they gladly accepted. I found that the tale of my possessions, and of my personal exploits, commanded a more willing audience than in the dull and ceremonious circle I had quitted; where, strange to say! the prospect of a change of wind had appeared a more acceptable topic than the glories of Shenstone Park. I was most in element in speaking of my last and most disgraceful exploit, and shone forth in all my lustre, the hero of an unfought duel with a man who had been at the Nile and at Trafalgar. My guests, however, I remarked, gradually

brought back the conversation, even from this interesting subject, to that of my circumstances and views; and when they ascertained that the former were independent, and the latter unsettled, they in their turn became communicative, and expounded in detail their own schemes. In the wild and almost romantic features of the speculation in which they were about to embark as fur traders in North America, they spoke of "Antres deserts vast and idle;" and offered, in consideration of a contribution to the expenses of the enterprise such as I had shewed myself able to afford, a proportionable share in its profits; and, what was more attractive to me, a prospect of active and useful participation in these hazardous and wandering operations. There is no need of a long story,—the bargain was speedily concluded, and a letter, explaining after my own fashion the advantages of the arrangement, reached my mother almost as soon as the one forwarded by Captain and Lieutenant ———, detailing the circumstances of the loss which his Majesty's navy had suffered in my services and person.

"The object of the Company to which I belonged, was to traffic with the Indians up the country for furs, which abound in those regions; it was composed of a number of English gentlemen and some natives of Canada, who were not admitted to the privileges of the gentlemen of the Company, but who performed the duties of agents for the pecuniary department,

and superintended the disposal of the furs. Three times a-year, a party of us went up the country, through regions necessarily very little explored, in search of the articles of our trade, and those who evinced most dexterity in the art of hunting and destroying the animals calculated for our purposes, and more particularly those who possessed the rarer art of dealing with the Indian tribes which inhabit that country, generally proved the most successful in these expeditions. I had been engaged more than once in this manner, and my superiors had had no reason to be dissatisfied with the result. The pursuit pleased me; there was a degree of excitement in the peril to which we were oftentimes exposed, which to one of bold and daring habits like myself, had a powerful charm, and I was glad to take the turn of any one of the Company who preferred a quiet life at the fountain head of the settlement, to encountering the hardships to which we were often subject.

“Passing over the numerous adventures in fights with hostile Indian tribes, the sufferings which we had to endure for want of provisions, and from excessive cold, I will hasten to that expedition from which I may date my present and future misery. About four years after the first settlement of the Company, and after having performed several journeys into the interior, I volunteered an expedition which seemed to promise more difficulty and danger than the preceding, from its being undertaken at the close of a fine season, and

with the object of exploring a part of the country said to be singularly barren of vegetation, and infested with tribes of a peculiarly savage and ferocious nature.

"We set forth to the number of six, myself included, attended by nine subordinates, the principal of whom was a Canadian named Montreville. This man I must particularize, as he is intimately bound up in the tale of sorrow I am about to relate. He was a native of French Canada; but having married an Anglo-American wife, had been persuaded by her, from a desire of living amongst English people, or for some other reason, to join the Company to which we belonged. She was a pretty, pleasing woman; and at the time I speak of, her husband had established her and her two young children in a cottage a little way up the country, but within the bounds which were deemed to belong to us. The cottage lay exactly in our route; and at the end of our first day's journey we rested at Montreville's house.

"Montreville himself was a man considerably superior to his station. He had received a degree of education, which, added to great natural acuteness, caused him to be looked up to by his inferiors, and treated by ourselves more on the footing of an equal, than that of a subordinate. I have already mentioned that Mrs. Montreville was pretty. I was struck by her appearance; and being restrained by no principle myself in these matters, in proportion as her attrac-

tions exceeded those of the ladies with whom I was acquainted, and as the difficulty of the undertaking seemed great, I became the more desirous of securing to myself the affection she seemed disposed to lavish on her husband alone. You see how bad I was; but prepare yourself for worse deeds than even what I have said promises.

“Mrs. Montreville, who at this time had a sister residing with her, being light-hearted and active, was very desirous of obtaining permission to accompany her husband on the expedition; her sister, she said, would take care of the children, and she would be useful to her husband in many little offices which a woman alone can perform. In vain the hardship and danger she would incur were set before her; in vain she was urged by all (myself excepted) to give up the wild scheme; she seemed so anxious to accompany her husband now, at the first time she would have it in her power to do so, as at another, her sister would not be on the spot to take care of her children, that our superior, Mr. Lambert, reluctantly consented, in consideration of the merits of Montreville, who we feared, should the request be denied, might abandon the expedition altogether. I was delighted with the arrangement. I saw in it only a series of opportunities for gaining affections which were pledged to another; reckless wretch that I was! regardless of the consequences to myself, to the man, to the woman had set my whole soul on ruining.

"After a stay of two nights at Montreville's cottage, we once more resumed our journey. Mrs. Montreville fully acted up to all she had advanced of her powers of enduring fatigue and hardship; and so unsuspecting was she of any sinister design on my part, that she permitted me to improve my acquaintance with her, and to perform many little services for which there occur frequent opportunities, on a long and perilous journey, sometimes performed on foot, sometimes on horses, sometimes in canoes. Her ready and grateful reception of my attentions, and the rational degree of satisfaction she appeared to take in my society, encouraged me in believing myself peculiarly favoured; and moreover, an incident occurred, which materially contributed to confirm that impression. On one of those occasions, when it fell to my turn to become a pedestrian, I accidentally drove a thorn into my foot. The pain and inflammation became so acute that it was vain for me to attempt to ride, much less walk; and the further prosecution of our journey was in consequence delayed for two days. Mrs. Montreville was the only female of the party; on her, therefore, especially devolved the office of nurse. She tended me with an assiduity and carefulness, which confirmed my belief of having materially gained ground in her affections. The vanity of man is ever on the alert; and very little encouragement suffices to induce the belief that he is signally preferred. Those offices of kindness in Mrs. Montreville, which women

rarely fail in conferring on their patients, I looked upon as tokens of especial favour towards myself individually; and fully impressed with the idea, I took an early opportunity after my recovery, of making advances towards the lady, which were met with surprise and incredulity, rather than anger or disdain. Nothing daunted, however, and giving little credit to Mrs. Montreville for any other quality than an unwillingness to appear ready to yield too easily, a few days afterwards I repeated my attack; but this time was answered by an indignant rebuff, and an intreaty not to force her to seek the protection of her husband. This nettled me to the quick. Provoked beyond control at my attempts having proved unsuccessful, enraged that a man, and that man my inferior, should be held *in terrorem* over me, I resolved to brave him. That very day I laid a plan forcibly to carry off Mrs. Montreville; and I determined on the following evening to carry my nefarious plan into execution.

"We were all remarkably well furnished with horses; mine was a superior one, and on him I mainly calculated to effect my purpose.

"Montreville was, I knew, in his turn to keep watch when we encamped for the night; his wife would not, therefore, have the benefit of his protection, nor I the obstacle of his presence in accomplishing the end I had in view. My intention was to entice her from her tent after the watch was set, on pretence of shewing her a curious wild flower which opened its petals only

at dusk ; and imperceptibly leading her on towards the spot where my horse was in readiness saddled and bridled, to place her upon it before me, and set off full gallop to a distant part of the wood with which I was acquainted, for we had not yet advanced beyond that country with which from previous excursions I was familiar.

"It was our custom to set the watch at sun-set ; immediately after that time I sought Montreville's tent ; and found his wife engaged in preparing the food with which it was her custom to supply her husband on those evenings when he was employed in the manner I have described. She looked pale, and seemed suffering. To my enquiries after her health, she replied she had caught a cold and severe head-ache, but expressed a confidence that she should soon be better. In her answers and deportment I thought I perceived a coldness and distrust, probably the consequences of my previous conduct towards her, which induced me to put forth all my powers of pleasing, and to assume a respectfulness of manner which should lull any suspicion she might have formed of the object of my visit at an hour which might be deemed somewhat unseasonable. I succeeded so far ; and she soon resumed her usual placid and unreserved manner. Not even her suffering appearance could turn me from my purpose. I had determined, come what might, to be no longer baffled by a woman and an American ; nor did

I for a moment waver in the plan I was resolved to pursue.

"In my acquaintance with Mrs. Montreville, I had discovered in her a taste for botany; and one of my modes of ingratiating myself, had been my searching for, and bringing her, such rare and curious plants, as I know to be worthy the attention of the botanist. Imperceptibly leading the conversation to this topic, I requested her to show me the specimens she had already collected, and mentioned to her, that in the course of my walk that morning, I had seen a plant which I thought would please her particularly, and which would be a desirable sample to add to her present collection. I then proposed to her to go with me and look at it, alleging that she would be enabled better to see its remarkable properties on its native stem, than if I gathered and brought it to her. She hesitated, I urged her, saying the evening was fine, the distance from the encampment a mere trifle, and the air would be likely to prove of service to her health. At length she suffered herself to be persuaded, and we left the tent together.

"We passed the boundary of the camp. As the twilight increased, and then rapidly deepened into gloom, she stopped and seemed unwilling to proceed.

"'It is but a short distance beyond where we are,' said I; 'do not go back now, the light will last us long enough.' As I said this, a malignant smile perhaps played upon my features, for with some indication of

surprise, and a perceptible motion of distrust, she looked up in my face, but still little dreaming with what a wretch she was in company, nor what a man of unbridled passions and totally devoid of moral restraint is capable of doing, she consented, and we went on. Presently she stopped again, and enquired for the plant I had brought to see her.

This time I believed we were no longer within hearing, and throwing off the mask, I cried this was no time for trifling; and seizing her arm, I forcibly impelled her forwards. She uttered one cry, but my horse was now at hand, and placing her upon him, I jumped up behind her, and instantly set off at full gallop. As I pursued my head-long career with slackened rein, I perceived on looking at her that she had fainted. A deadly paleness overspread her countenance, and I urged on my steed, that we might arrive at a place where I could give her succour. At length we did arrive. She partially recovered, only, poor unfortunate! to find herself in the grasp of a villain, and so horror-struck did she seem when the truth flashed upon her mind, that she turned from me with disgust and abhorrence, and rent the air with her cries and lamentations, her face bathed in floods of tears.

"Meanwhile, a storm was gathering over my guilty and devoted head, which I only averted by additional crime. The cry uttered by Mrs. Montreville had been heard by her husband, whom I erroneously supposed out of reach. A vague suspicion crossed his mind

that the voice was that of his wife. Unable himself, however, to leave his post, he strove to persuade himself that the notion was a false one; but when night came, and the accustomed ministering hand appeared not, he grew seriously alarmed, and earnestly requested a passer-by to repair to his tent, and bring him word whether all was right there. His messenger returned with the intelligence that his tent was deserted, and the fire on the hearth extinguished, and bearing marks of having been neglected for some hours. Distracted with the news, and now confirmed in his belief that the cry of distress he had heard some hours before proceeded from his wife, he implored permission of Mr. Lambert, for that once to be released from his duty, stating to him the peculiarly distressing circumstances of the case. But with great harshness, Montreville was refused the boon. 'The example was so bad,' was the hard-hearted reply; 'so many requests for leave of absence would ensue, should this one be complied with, that he must remain at his post until the usual time of relief.'

"Montreville, maddened by this answer, declared he would not obey; that his whole happiness, nay, the existence of his wife, who, probably had been carried off by some marauding Indian tribe, was perhaps at stake, and that, in spite of the prohibition he had received, he was resolved to lose not a moment in the pursuit. So saying, he darted from the presence of his superior, and mounting his horse, presently vanished

in the direction from which he believed the voice to have proceeded. Long he rode in vain, but at length having hit upon the right path, he suddenly appeared emerging from the copse which immediately surrounded the spot where we had halted. His wife on seeing him, gave a piercing shriek. That shriek was the last she ever uttered! I hear it still ringing in my ears, and at that moment one pang of remorse shot across my mind.

"Mrs. Montreville's next movement was to rush into her husband's arms, who, on seeing me, had instantly dismounted, taking his pistols from the holster of his saddle. His wife's agitation, my own guilty looks and forced silence, all told the tale of wickedness and misery at one glance.

" 'Monster!' he cried out to me, 'you have ruined us both! defend yourself!'

"I was also armed, though at the first moment bewildered, and unwilling to make use of my weapon. Montreville, however, had in an instant placed his wife at a little distance, and seeing me pistol in hand, levelled and fired. His shot struck a tree close to where I stood, and glancing from it, buried itself in the heart of his wife! I cannot; I have no courage to tell the remainder of the scene. To picture Montreville's despair is beyond my powers. The recollection of it is to me now surpassing agony! And yet, Miss Graham, my heart was yet untouched. I was shocked for the moment, but the feeling was but transient.

"If ever wretch existed upon earth, that wretch was myself. Alas, you must abhor me now! What will your sensations then be when my tale of iniquity is finished, for I have yet more guilt and wickedness to relate."

Alice paused in the narrative. "What! more guilt, more iniquity than has been detailed?" said she to herself. "Nay, it is impossible! And yet that George Shenstone, the gentle, the kind, the excellent, should have been such as he has described himself!" and her thoughts reverted to Arthur, who, equal to George in all his merits, had ever been irreproachable as he was at the present moment. She blessed God for it, and almost wept with shame as she thought that more than once she had found herself comparing the two, and not always she feared awarding the palm where it was most due. Alice's curiosity respecting George's previous history was doubtless reprehensible. The mystery once solved, however, dispelled an illusion which might perhaps, have proved dangerous to her future peace, or derogatory to her honour; for her word was passed to Arthur, and Arthur far away in a foreign land, toiling to acquire that which was to enable them at some future period to unite their destinies. As she read, all this flashed upon her mind, she saw the abyss upon which she had been standing, but she saw it in time to retire from its verge unscathed, and again and again she mentally asked Arthur's forgive-

ness for suffering her fancy thus for a moment to have usurped that place in her heart which her affections alone had a right to fill.

CHAPTER VII.

Thou in whose grasp a feeble woman's arm
Shrunk in its weakness, venture if thou dar'st
To try the force of mine.

Is he then murdered? Tell me.

CATHERINE OF CLEVELAND.

"LEAVING Montreville to perform the last duties to his unfortunate partner, I slowly took the way of the camp. He noticed not my departure, but remained so absorbed in his misery, that even the tide of vengeance seemed past by. To grief was that hour devoted, and to grief alone.

"As I paced the road so lately traversed under different circumstances, I revolved in my mind how I should make my story good to my companions. Though angels of light in comparison with myself, they were men of lax principles, and not such as would look upon the deed of which I had been guilty, with the abhorrence it deserved. On my arrival, I found the camp in great indignation at Montreville's having braved his superiors, and refused to obey the

rules of discipline they had laid down. With such a feeling in my favour, I easily persuaded them that I had been more sinned against than sinning, and that the advances made to me had been such that no man could be expected to resist. Of the fearful catastrophe with which the affair had ended, I made no mention: trusting that the disgrace into which Montreville's disobedience of orders had brought him, would invalidate any statement he might make to my prejudice, I gave it to be understood that I had left Mrs. Montreville with her husband.

"Two days elapsed, but Montreville appeared not. We contemplated resuming our journey, when towards evening Montreville was seen riding slowly into the camp. He was pale and haggard, and so altered in appearance as to be hardly recognizable. Another momentary pang of remorse shot across me as I gazed on him; but he cast a look of mortal hatred and loathing upon me, which restored the original feelings of my soul.

"Scarcely had he made his appearance, when two subordinates were directed to seize and make him their prisoner. On their accosting him, he cried, 'Seize *me*! 'tis he (pointing to me) who should be seized; the murderer!' They looked at him in surprise, believing him to be mad, and indeed the haggard expression of his countenance warranted the suspicion. He was hurried before the superior, and desired to answer for his disobedience and absence with-

out leave. The poor man, indignant at being treated as a culprit, told his story, implicating me of course in the whole transaction, and loudly calling for justice and retribution. Montreville was not destined to obtain them; but, though sometimes tardy in their approaches, they fail not to overtake their victim at last. Montreville has been amply avenged!

"His story did not meet with the sympathy of his hearers. The light in which I had represented the matter, was so favourable to my own vanity, that all he obtained were jeers and laughter for having suffered another to win the good graces of his wife. He owned to the mode by which she had met her death, but he bitterly accused me of having been the original cause of that tragic event. To this I retorted, that on the contrary it was to my generosity that he was indebted for the preservation of his own life, for though deliberately shot at myself, I had not returned the fire, and that, instead of heaping on me the odium of an atrocity of which he was himself guilty, I was deserving of his gratitude for having been silent to the company on the subject, with which his voluntary confession alone had made them acquainted.

"Such was my defence to Montreville's accusation, such my mode of palliating my crime! The statement, though strictly speaking true, was of a nature to demand further investigation, and was open to some suspicion; but in the wilds of North America, with men whose chief object was the acquisition of mer-

chandise, not the pure administration of justice, or the nice investigation of suspicious circumstances, it was hardly to be expected that the unhappy Montreville should obtain redress. On the contrary, he was ordered to consider himself a prisoner for the remainder of the expedition, kept to the most menial offices, and guarded strictly by two men, with whom he was not permitted to have any freedom of intercourse.

"And I looked on and saw this brave man deprived of his liberty, his honour, his wife, through my means, without coming forward and owning myself the wretch to whom alone this punishment was due!

"The following day we resumed our journey. As the winter season advanced our route grew daily more perilous. The rivers we were under the necessity of crossing were hourly growing more impetuous, and their currents increasing in rapidity, from the snow and rain which now occasionally fell. To pass these streams we were obliged to construct canoes, and on such occasions Montreville's ready and willing services had ever been found most useful. But the restraint under which he was kept, rendered him an unwilling agent, and we soon found that, deprived of his valuable aid, we should fare infinitely worse than we had hitherto done, and this at a time when his assistance was doubly important. After pursuing our journey for two days, meeting with difficulties at every step, sometimes paddling along in our canoes, sometimes landing, and dragging or carrying them

sometimes towing them along the shore, we reached a rapid, which once surmounted, we hoped in future to find a freer passage. There was considerable danger and difficulty in getting the canoes up the rapids, and a consultation was held by the superiors as to the propriety of overlooking Montreville's offence, and releasing him from his punishment, that we might again have the benefit of his superior knowledge of all connected with the management and navigation of the canoes. The proposal was agreed to; Montreville was summoned, and told by the superior that he was free, and that if by his diligence and activity in their service, during the remainder of the expedition, he gave the company reason to be satisfied his offence would be forgiven, and no further punishment inflicted upon him.

"He heard them in silence, and when the superior ceased speaking, a bitter smile curled his lip, expressive as I thought of contempt and disdain, and consciousness that to our fears for our own safety alone he owed his enlargement.

"I have already stated that our number amounted in all to fifteen. To transport these and our provisions three canoes were necessary. Montreville and two others were directed to pilot one of these up the rapids, in order to discover the most favourable passage for the remainder.

"The canoe was presently manned, and we all stood upon the bank, anxiously awaiting the result of

the experiment. They pushed off. Repeatedly was the little vessel driven back with great violence by the uncontrollable velocity of the torrent, and the utmost skill and strength of the men were in requisition to enable them in the slightest degree to make head against it.

“Montreville and his companions made several abortive attempts to ascend the rapid, and at length showing signs that they must take in additional hands, they began to make for the shore. About the middle of the stream one of the men made a false stroke with his pole, which missing the bottom, he overreached himself, and fell into the water, upsetting the canoe by his fall. For an instant all three were invisible, but presently one of the men was seen grasping at the canoe, by which he contrived to sustain himself above water, until reaching the shallow part of the stream, he was presently enabled to walk ashore. Montreville was still in the water; he had already sunk once, before a canoe could put off to his assistance. At length appearing on the surface, one of the crew, who had leaped into the empty boat and was now near him, seized his clothes and drew him ashore nearly lifeless.

“Shall I say it?—when the excitement of the moment was past,—when the painful sensation of seeing a fellow-creature struggling in the waves for life was over,—and this is a matter of impulse rather than of feeling,—shall I indeed own it?—I regretted that the man whom I had wronged had not there met with a

watery grave! I repined at seeing him revive; I longed—wretch that I was!—to be rid of the sight of him whose happiness I had completely destroyed!

“The next day Montreville was restored to health and vigour, and we resumed our journey, contriving by other means to pass the rapids, which had been so nearly fatal to three of our party. Our hope of finding the river smoother and more navigable proved unfounded. The men began to flag from the great exertion required to make head against the numerous currents, eddies, &c. which every moment met us on our way. To add to the inconvenience of our situation, the rainy season set in earlier than is usual in that climate, and we were constantly drenched to the skin by steady down-pouring rain. Four of the men, amongst whom was Montreville, became so debilitated, from the difficulty and excessive fatigue of the navigation, that it was deemed imprudent to permit them any longer to follow the expedition, the hardships of which were by no means likely to subside. It was therefore determined to send them back in one of the canoes to the settlement, whilst the remainder pursued their journey. The superior, however, announced that one officer of the Company must return with them, and being the junior I was fixed upon, as the person to whom the command of the retreating party should be intrusted.

“Nothing could exceed my repugnance to thus being brought into closer contact with Montreville, whom I feared and hated beyond all other men. I

entreated the superior to reconsider his decision. I offered to resign any share of the profits of the expedition which might devolve upon me, and I assured him that, in consequence of the events which had connected me with Montreville, I could not consider my life safe in undertaking a long and perilous voyage, exposed to the machinations of a man who was possessed of complete influence over the minds of all the subordinates, and at whose beck I had no doubt that every one of them would be ready to turn upon me the first time I attempted any exercise of my authority over them. To these representations the superior turned a deaf ear. Harsh and overbearing as he had shewn himself in Montreville's case, he did not think proper to award any favour to me, and even put forth an insinuation that I was actuated by fear in the representations that I had made. Stung with the imputation, but unable to refute it, I had nothing left me but to submit, and with every feeling of malice and passion in my breast, I withdrew to prepare for our approaching separation. The following day was fixed upon for our departure.

"The stock of provisions having become very scanty, a quantity sufficient only for three days' consumption was the utmost that could be apportioned to us, although that length of time was the shortest possible period in which, with the help of the stream in our favour, we could expect or hope to reach the head-quarters of the settlement. I have at this moment a vivid recollection of the excessive dislike I

felt to the idea of being in such close quarters with Montreville, as was unavoidable in a small canoe with six individuals. To make a second remonstrance after the reception my first had met with, and the imputation cast upon me, was impossible. I could scarcely conceal my anger and vexation at being thus baffled and deprived of making the expedition on which I had long been bent. We embarked. The first day we drove rapidly down the stream, until reaching some narrows, we landed, under the impression that the canoe would be safer in the guidance of men on each bank, provided with lines and poles, than if we navigated it in the usual manner with the paddles. One man, however, was left in the boat to take care of the stores, his additional weight not being deemed likely to be productive of mischief.

“For the first half of the descent down the narrows, we contrived to steer the canoe very prosperously, when on a sudden one of the lines gave way, and instantly the boat upset. The unfortunate man left in it disappeared in a moment, the vessel itself was carried with irresistible force to the opposite shore, and, to our infinite dismay, we beheld it dashed to pieces on the rocks, and all our stores washed down the stream. The poor fellow who had been stationed in the canoe, we never saw again; and when I reflected upon our probable fate, thus in an instant deprived of all resources, both of food to sustain us, and arms to defend ourselves from bears and venom-

ous snakes, which in those regions the traveller is liable to meet with, I almost envied the poor fellow, whose death had been instantaneous, whilst ours bid fair to prove a lingering or a painful one, either by famine, or the merciful fangs of those wild animals. We were five men, destitute of every necessary of life, and at a period of the year when roots and fruits are scarce, and when the only subsistence to be gained in those regions must be acquired by fishing or shooting, the implements for which had been, with the remainder of our effects, lost by the unfortunate catastrophe I have related. Our only hope of preservation was, as nearly as possible, to follow the course of the river, and take the chance of finding some humane Indian amongst the savage tribes which infest these deserts, who could supply us with sufficient food to reach the settlement, and who would guide us to the place we were desirous of reaching. This was a matter of no small difficulty; the waters having risen considerably we found the banks constantly inundated, and were obliged to force our way through underwood, which tore our clothes, defaced our persons, and left us more than ever exposed to the inclemencies of the season. Those who were already suffering from sickness, could ill endure the excessive toil of such a march; and, indeed, at the close of the third day two of the invalids gave way, and lying down declared their total inability to stir another step, and their resolution to remain and die where they

were. The persuasions of the others were unavailing; and after many vain attempts to induce them to make another effort to proceed, we were under the painful necessity of leaving them to their fate, and endeavouring, by superior perseverance and energy, to avoid the miserable death to which these unhappy men had resigned themselves. Montreville, and myself, and another, were now all that remained of the party. Our nourishment having for some time been scarcely any other than water, with now and then a few berries, which still lingered on some of the nearly leafless trees, our weakness soon became excessive, and Montreville and myself, who had hitherto borne up the rest of the party, began to flag, and to look forward with dismay to the horrors of our position. My sensations at the prospect of being left alone with Montreville are not to be described, and I saw that the surviving subordinate could scarcely outlive another day, so great were his exhaustion and emaciation. My fears were confirmed. The following day was his last, and Montreville and I were now the sole survivors of the six individuals who had been separated from the Company. Hitherto our exertions for our common preservation had been so constantly necessary that Montreville, in the urgency of our situation, seemed to have forgotten for a time the wrongs he had suffered from me. Now, however, that we were alone, his loathing appeared to return. His averted look when I addressed him—the evident

effort it was to him to hold any communication with me—the marked manner with which, when we were brought into contact, he recoiled from my touch, and shrunk even when he saw me approach, all betokened horror and aversion. How richly deserved on my part!

“Fearful that, being now on equal terms, his rage and despair would prompt him to some act of violence, I was constantly on my guard to repel any attack he might be induced to make upon me; nor were my suspicions unfounded. In the evening of the day on which our last surviving companion had breathed his last, Montreville, believing himself the stronger of the two, suddenly leaped upon me, and grasping me by the throat, cried, ‘Villain, it is my turn now! this hour shalt thou expiate thy atrocious deed! Down; monster—execrated wretch!’ The struggle between us was fearful, and Montreville would certainly have succeeded in overpowering me, had not his foot come in contact with the root of a tree, stumbling over which he lost his hold. I immediately seized the advantage, and, ere he could recover himself, dashed him to the ground nearly senseless. The attempt was not repeated, and we dragged on two more days of distrust and hatred. I returned his aversion with defiance, and steeled my heart against remorse, nor for one moment saw in my present sufferings a just retribution for my crimes. I cursed those whom I thought had been instrumental in bringing me into this

condition, and vowed vengeance against the superior for the insinuations he had thrown out against me, and for his refusal of listening to my urgent entreaties not to be separated from my companions. Evil passions, unmitigated, unsubdued, and uncontrolled, reigned paramount in my breast.

“At length the sight of Montreville became intolerable to me. I longed for the moment when he should sink under the pangs we were both daily suffering from hunger and exhaustion. But no—he appeared to retain his remaining strength more entire than myself, and at length I began to suspect that, unknown to me, he had some secret mode of procuring sustenance, of which no share fell to my lot. Impressed with this idea, I determined to watch him narrowly—as narrowly, at least, as my decaying strength would permit. One morning as I lay half slumbering on the ground where we had passed the night, I thought I perceived him gently rise, and then cast an inquiring eye towards me to ascertain, as I conceived, that I still slept. He then walked away in another direction, and no sooner was his back turned upon me, than raising what little energies I could muster, I also rose, and cautiously followed his footsteps. He presently disappeared among some bushes; I still followed, and having with some difficulty penetrated through a thick copse, I beheld Montreville feasting upon the remains of a fish, whilst another lay at his side, reserved, in all probability, for a future meal.

Maddened at the sight, for men are maddened with hunger as well as wickedness, with one blow I laid him prostrate, and seizing the fish was about to make away with it; when recovering himself, Montreville in his turn attacked me, and attempted to wrest it from me. A violent struggle ensued between us. Montreville's strength was so superior to mine, in consequence of the sustenance he had taken, that he had succeeded in getting me down, when I espied, lying by his side, the clasp knife which my enemy had made use of in his meal; I possessed myself of it, and making a desperate effort, dragged Montreville towards me, and plunged the knife into his breast. For some time we lay together; Montreville's heart's blood was fast flowing from his veins, and I was so entirely exhausted by the scuffle as to be incapable of motion.

"Thus had I added *murder* to the catalogue of my crimes. The height of human wickedness and atrocity which I had attained was a fearful one. By my early misconduct I had ruined the peace of my mother. I had dragged a happy wife from her happy home; I had been the cause of that unfortunate woman's misery and death; I had heaped infamy and disgrace upon her husband, after having for ever destroyed his peace; and lastly I had crowned my atrocities by putting that husband to death by my own hand.

"Such, Miss Graham, is the catalogue of my crimes—such *was* the man to whom you have given your

esteem and friendship. Alas! you cannot now wonder at my unwillingness to recite a tale, which I fear, notwithstanding all your assurances, must have changed that friendship and esteem into loathing and abhorrence! I dare not ask it—tell me not it is so!

“With some difficulty I contrived to bury the unfortunate Montréville, fearing that his mangled remains might tell a tale I was by no means anxious should be revealed. This object accomplished, I returned to the place I had left, and began seriously to turn in my mind how I should extricate myself from my present situation, and how I should account to the Company (should I, indeed, ever join them again) for the disappearance of my comrade. This latter task was, however, of easy management. All those who have travelled in the wilds of America, know full well to what dangers men are exposed. Death by starvation, by drowning, or at the hands of the Indian tribes, must ever be confronted; and it was of common occurrence that some of our numbers should perish by one of these means, that I had little or no fear of suspicion attaching to me of the foul deed I had perpetrated. The reaching the head-quarters of the settlement was a much more doubtful prospect.

“The fish left by Montreville served me for a meal for two days, during which time I pursued the track we had determined on previously to his death; but my strength was so limited that I made but very little progress, and the end of the second day saw me but

a few miles removed from the scene of bloodshed and wickedness I had left.

“Relief, however, was at hand. On the morning of the third day, awaking from slumber, I beheld standing over me, with his eyes glaring upon my face, an Indian armed with bow and arrows. My first impulse was flight; and in the conviction that his intentions must be hostile, I endeavoured to rise, and put my design in execution. Such, however, was my weakness, that I fell back to the ground utterly incapable of any further exertion than that of raising myself upon my elbow. From some marks on his person, with which from long residence in that country I was familiarized, I suspected that the Indian before me belonged to one of the hostile tribes, but I soon discovered my error. He cast an eye of pity on my emaciated appearance, and the lacerated condition of my feet; making signs that his hut was near, he lifted me in his arms, and carried me into a dwelling, a hut made weather-proof by deer-skin covering. Here I found his wife and child, the former of whom treated me with a degree of kindness, nay, a tenderness, which is peculiar to women even in a savage state. I remained under the care of these hospitable Indians until my strength was sufficiently recruited to enable me to proceed, when these kind and simple people furnished me with provisions for two days, and put me in a path which they assured me would in that space of time conduct me to the limits of the settle-

ment to which I belonged. I found their information perfectly correct; and on the second day reached the point from which we had started, after sleeping at the unfortunate Montreville's cottage.

"My route lay close by the side of that cottage; and as I drew near to it, I began to feel an unconquerable aversion to passing it. How to avoid it I knew not; but I felt as though the spirits of my victims would rise upon its threshold, and upbraid me as I passed—nay, I even fancied I heard that piercing cry—the last Mrs. Montreville ever uttered? So forcible was this impression upon me, that when first I recognized the objects which apprized me of the neighborhood of the cottage, I stopped short, as if in expectation of meeting its inmates, nor could I for some time muster courage to proceed on my way. At length, however, with a desperate effort, I rushed on at full speed with an averted face, my sensations being those of a man who believes himself to be pursued by demons. Nay, the illusions produced on a disordered frame and a vivid imagination, were so strong, that for some time after I had passed the cottage, that piercing shriek rung in my ears, and I was convinced that the spirit of the unhappy woman did indeed pursue me. After running thus for a mile, I fell down exhausted, and nearly deprived of sense. On awakening to consciousness, I found myself in a civilized region; and the necessity of regaining my composure, and inventing a plausible tale to account

for my long absence, and my returning alone became apparent to my senses. As I journeyed slowly along, I framed a narrative calculated from its plausibility to impose upon the credulity of Mr. Lambert and the other heads of the settlement.

"From the time of our first parting with him up to Montreville's death, I told them the strict truth, and detailed the gradual decay and lingering death of the men who had been sent with me, whose previous ill health, indeed, made such a termination highly probable. It was less easy to account for Montreville's decease. Though suffering from the effects of debility, he was well known to be of robust frame and hardy temperament, to be proof against the inclemencies of the seasons, and to possess sufficient knowledge of the country and energy of mind to enable him to surmount the difficulties of our situation. It was desirable then to assign an accidental cause for this disappearance. I therefore told them, that after wandering some days in search of better food to enable us to prosecute the remainder of our journey (the stock sent with us having been some days consumed), we reached a rapid stream, on the opposite side of which Montreville affirmed he had discerned certain roots and fruit trees, which he knew to be particularly nutritious and agreeable to the palate. The stream was rapid, and so intersected with rocks that the attempt to cross it must be attended with considerable peril; we paced the borders of the stream. We continued

in the hope of discovering a fordable place, but without success, and at length decided upon plunging in. We had nearly reached the centre, when Montreville, who was a-head of me, was suddenly carried by the excessive rapidity of the stream against a pointed rock, which coming in contact with his head, inflicted a blow that either killed him on the spot, or so stunned him as to render him incapable of further exertion; he sunk to rise no more. Such was the story I fabricated to conceal my crime; and as the recital was far from being improbable in itself, it met with the ready belief of all to whom I related it. In the remainder of my narrative, I again adhered to truth; I told them, that making the best of my way back to the landing place, I succeeded in reaching it, and having crawled into an adjoining wood, was there found by the hospitable Indian, who afterwards proved himself my friend and preserver.

“The news of Montreville’s death was heard with concern by all. The company had lost in him one of its best servants; and one whom they would find it exceedingly difficult to replace.”

CHAPTER VIII.

Sinking underneath the weight
Of sorrow, yet more heavily oppress'd
Beneath the burden of my sins, I turned
In that dread hour of Him who from the Cross
Calls to the heavy laden.

SOCIETY.

"FOR about a month subsequent to the events I have detailed to you, I continued at the head-quarters of the settlement. During that period I experienced a degree of restlessness and uneasiness so painful, a recollection so vivid and distressing of those scenes in which I had acted so black a part, that I looked to complete and entire change of place and companions alone to drive the remembrance of the past from my mind. In this conviction, and on the plea of ill health, I requested leave of absence for a few months to recruit my shattered constitution; and on obtaining the boon, I determined to repair to New York, the novelty of which, I fully expected, would dispel the impressions my crimes had made upon my mind. Provided with letters of recommendation to some of the principal inhabitants of the city from Mr. Lambert, I took my departure.

"But as you will easily foresee, my expectations of deriving peace of mind from change of scene were not realized. The same restlessness, the same disquietude pursued me; neither the society to which my letters of introduction had procured me admission, nor the numerous objects of interest which abound in the town where I had taken up my abode, could succeed in dispelling the uneasiness I experienced. At length it reached so distressing a point that I could no longer endure solitude. Every night I dreamt I heard the cry of Mrs. Montreville, and saw her husband's ghastly form stretched on the sod before me; and frequently waking from these ever-recurring dreams of horror, would rush from my bed, nor dare to return to it till the morning light had lent its aid to dispel these visions of a disordered and guilty imagination. This constant nervous excitement at length wore my frame to a shadow, and finally my constitution gave way. I was seized with a raging fever, which for many weeks deprived me at times of reason. During the hours of my delirium, it is probable that I raved of those events which were ever uppermost in my mind; for at intervals of consciousness, I gathered from the language of my hostess that she had requested an eminent ecclesiastic, to whom a letter she had found in my possession was addressed, to call and see me, thinking from words that had escaped me during my illness, that I had something on my mind I was anxious to disclose. Sometimes I fancied I

had seen, sitting by my bed-side, a mild-looking man, who regarded me with interest, but with whom I had not as yet exchanged a word. All, however, was confused, and what I have related seemed to partake more of the nature of a dream than of a reality.

“One day, when the crisis of my disorder had passed away, I awoke from a sounder sleep than I had for a length of time enjoyed, and opening my eyes beheld the figure of the individual in question sitting at my side. In a gentle voice he inquired after my health, administered a potion to me, and in his demeanour resembled those ministering angels the *Sœurs de la Charité*, more than any other object of comparison. He informed me that he had called in consequence of a letter brought to him by my hostess from his friend Mr. Lambert, and finding me in so deplorable a condition, common humanity had prompted him to endeavour to relieve to the utmost of his power, a young man destitute of friends and connections in the place.

“This first kindness on his part was followed by frequent visits, in which he showed himself ever kind and gentle as at first.

“My convalescence was a long one, and the constant society of this gentleman had more effect towards soothing my mind, and promoting a degree of calm to my frame, than any other remedy which had as yet been applied. I learnt that he was the pastor of a Protestant congregation, and a man eminent for his

writings and for his high character, and remarkable for the influence a judicious zeal on his part had procured for him over the minds of those on whom he had any spiritual superintendence. His efforts were invariably tempered with mildness and discretion; entirely divested of harshness or even of authoritative-ness, they were always received in good part, and himself much beloved by all those who were well acquainted with him. The influence he exercised over others, I felt him gradually gaining over myself. He would talk to me in a strain to which I was wholly unused. It is true that I had some glimmering perception of right and wrong, and I knew the difference between them when reviewing the actions of others; but with regard to myself, my passions were so strong as to overpower every principle that had ever been inculcated upon me. If I felt an inclination to any action, however reprehensible, the moral or religious guilt attached to it never for a moment interfered with its completion; though occasionally the opinion of the world, and the possible consequences which might ensue, did sometimes cross my mind. In such cases, the result of reflection on these points, was not to give up the action, but how to perform it with requisite secrecy. Mr. Wentworth (such was the name of the person of whom I have been speaking), ignorant of the character of the man on whom he had lavished so much time and kindness, conversed with me as with one of an ordinary stamp; and though, as our acquaintance pro-

ceeded, it must have become evident to him how little restraint I thought of placing either upon my passions or my inclinations, yet by nothing approaching harshness or intemperate zeal did he ever weary or disgust me, or create the smallest desire of being freed from his prolonged visits. Imperceptibly, my mind acquired a new one. I began to feel an interest in matters on which hitherto I had scarcely bestowed a thought ; I began to see more clearly than I ever yet had done, the monstrosity of vice and the superior advantages of virtue ; and at last I began to derive positive pleasure, in listening to Mr. Wentworth's conversation.

“ The next step to this was a more painful one. I discovered the magnitude of my own crimes. The sensations of Felix might have been my own—‘ And as Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled.’ As it may be supposed, this feeling increased upon me as I gained additional knowledge, and at length concealment became so intolerable that I determined to disclose my history to Mr. Wentworth. This resolution on my part may be accounted the first indication of the new view of things I had now acquired, and it may easily be conceived how great must have been the struggle within me, before I could put such a design in execution.

‘ The communication, I believe, gave nearly as much pain to Mr. Wentworth as to myself, but never

theless he did not vary in his uniform kind treatment of me. He was aware that I now saw my misdeeds in their proper light, and that my former reckless state of desperation had made way for deep and lasting repentance and contrition. Nay, so strong was my sense of guilt that I proposed to make a formal and circumstantial confession of what I had done to the constituted authorities of the place. I was only deterred from pursuing this course by Mr. Wentworth's representation to me, that in so doing I might perpetrate another murder in the person of my mother. 'No,' said he, 'you will better answer the end of your existence by returning to your mother; and by your altered conduct, making up for the many years of sorrow and anxiety you have cost her. Let her for ever remain in ignorance of what you have confided to me, and let your future behaviour to her make her forget the character of the son she parted with five years ago, in delight at the change wrought in him on his return.' I determined to follow Mr. Wentworth's advice, and changing my former plan of returning to the Company on the restoration of my health, I wrote to Mr. Lambert to request my discharge, stating my intention of repairing to England as soon as I was able to bear the fatigue of the voyage. My next care was to write to my mother (and hitherto I had been as neglectful of that duty as of every other) to announce my projected return, and to express the hope that I should be with her in the course of a few months.

“The remainder of the time I passed at New York was chiefly devoted to the society of Mr. Wentworth, and to a course of study and reading recommended by him. In a short time I found myself sufficiently recovered to enable me to set sail for England, and about three years ago I rejoined my mother; since which period it has been my constant endeavour, by every means in my power, to atone for the misery and discomfort I had inflicted upon her in my youth.—Such, Miss Graham, is the melancholy tale of guilt and remorse which you have not shrunk from hearing; a recital of circumstances, which not only embittered the earlier years of my mother’s life, but which brought ruin, disgrace, and destruction on two unoffending and excellent individuals, neither of whom • had ever harboured an injurious thought of, or feeling towards myself, and whose fate I have to answer for, —its sole and criminal cause! Was I wrong in fearing to disclose such a tale? Can you, to whose friendship I owe the few happy hours it will ever be my lot to enjoy, now regard me with the same feelings of kindness and toleration you have hitherto extended towards me? or must I for ever renounce the hope of being received by you as a friend, and look for those symptoms of aversion which this recital can scarcely have failed to create?

“Oh let it not be so! I have repented in dust and ashes—I am not the wretch I was four years ago! Let me still enjoy that only blessing I have left me,

your mild and gentle accents, your sympathy—would that I could say your love!

“But this is idle. Forgive me, Miss Graham, I am not justified in saying this. It has fallen from me in spite of myself, and at a time when least of all should I have had the presumption to name that word. Yet, having named it, I cannot draw my pen through it. Let me have the consolation of knowing that you are now acquainted with every feeling as with every action of my life.

“I will detain you no longer. I have only left me to entreat you to be lenient. Do not forget that ‘There is more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.’

“GEORGE SHENSTONE.”

CHAPTER IX.

If you would learn Death's character attend.
 All casts of conduct, all degrees of health,
 All dies of fortune, and all dates of age,
 Together shook in his impartial urn
 Come forth at random.

YOUNG.

THE interest with which Alice read this singular recital will be easily conceived.

The result of her reflections, upon the whole, was any thing but satisfactory. Mingled feelings, sometimes of aversion for a person capable of doing the deeds she had been made acquainted with, sometimes of astonishment at such extreme depravity, and lastly, of pity for the deep contrition which had so entirely taken the place of those vices which had previously reigned paramount in George Shenstone's heart, were by turns uppermost in her mind; and though these last certainly had permanent possession, yet she began to regret having ever induced him to make the disclosure of his early history, and to question first whether she was justified in worming from him his secret, and next whether it had not been far better had she, like Mrs. Shenstone, remained in ignorance of it, and been content with liking him for his obvious merits, without seeking to know the cause of his evident depression. She had now subjected herself to the awkwardness of a meeting in which their mutual embarrassment would probably be so conspicuous to bystanders, as in all likelihood to elicit inquiries from Julia, whose sharp and penetrating glance could not fail to discern something unusual in their demeanour towards each other. It was some consolation that from her father she need fear nothing on that head. Mr. Graham never discovered what was not expressly pointed out to him; and indeed, when his attention was directed to any thing by his eldest daughter, who usually acted as the "flapper" on these occasions, he

rarely understood what was meant; and, not seldom denied that the incidents and events his daughter pointed out to him, meant anything at all. Nor was he always, in this last opinion, so far wrong as his daughter was wont to believe. The wise and the clever in the ways of the world, or at least those who are considered, or consider themselves such, are not a little apt to overshoot the mark; to invest motions, smiles, and looks with an importance they are far from deserving. On so slight a foundation as these, theories have been built founded upon feelings, dispositions, characters, completely at variance with reality; nay, sometimes even with probability; and I have oftentimes sat by and laughed in my sleeve, at hearing adepts in the art of decyphering these looks and gestures, match them with thoughts and motives I have known to be entirely and completely at variance with the fact.

On this occasion, I fear it must be confessed, that Alice was wrong in the course she had pursued. Calmly reviewing her recent conduct in this matter, she had candour enough to see and own to herself her error. It soon became obvious to her, that—avowedly not ignorant of the state of his feelings towards herself—the interest for George evinced by her desire to know what he seemed anxious to conceal, must be looked upon, and might operate as an encouragement of his attentions which it was most decidedly improper to give. It may, however, be questioned whether in

all this business our heroine was not carried away by a growing interest for George Shenstone, which, if the truth must be told, might, had he been present, have excited some uneasy feelings in Arthur Ashmont's breast.

But the perusal of his narrative had in a great measure changed the nature of those feelings towards him. Compassion was now uppermost in her breast; and, though we are told that "pity is akin to love," that kindred was still separated by a barrier which, unless removed, must ever prevent their being blended in one. That she had not acquired the means she fondly anticipated of lightening the burden which pressed so heavily upon his mind, was also a source of regret and disappointment to her.

The disagreeable truth had now become tolerably apparent, namely that (tell it not in Gath!) the gratification of her curiosity had a larger share than any other feeling, in her strong desire to be made acquainted with the mystery in which the character of her friend was enveloped.

Another weighty matter still remained to be debated; should she return an answer to this long letter? or should she leave, until their next interview, any comment she might be disposed to make upon it? Then, again, should she notice his expressions of regard for herself, or should she pass them by, as upon the first occasion when he declared his attachment to her? It was a nice point; and in their relative situa-

tions towards each other, almost equally difficult either to advert to the subject, or to be silent upon it.

After much reflection and cogitation, she determined upon acknowledging the receipt of the letter, without comment, and to trust to accident or circumstances, for any opinion she might be called upon to give, when next she met Mr. Shenstone.

The next morning, at the breakfast-table, she needed some skill to parry Julia's attacks. "Well, Alice," said she, "have you got through the voluminous correspondence delivered to you last night?"

"Yes," said Alice, "I read it last night before I went to bed."

"And were there many details as to what Mrs. Shenstone thinks of doing at R——?"

"The letter I received was on another subject," said Alice.

"Eh?" said Mr. Graham.

"I was telling Julia, the letter I received last night was not upon the subject she imagined."

"No! How came that? What did Julia think?"

"She thought ————" began Alice.

"Oh, never mind, papa," interrupted Julia, "it could not amuse you."

"I dare say you thought it was about John Bailey's farm, Julia, did not you?" said Mr. Graham.

"No, papa; indeed I thought no such thing."

"Why, that was precisely what we were talking about, was not it?"

Now Mr. Graham was much occupied about John Bailey's farm, and Alice hoped that the conversation might quietly glide into that channel, and herself be spared any further attack from her sister. But Julia had no intention of letting her off so easily—of leaving any method of pumping untried, in the hope of extracting from Alice the contents of the letter which excited her curiosity. With some difficulty Alice contrived to keep her own counsel, and taking advantage of the first opportunity of escape, quitted the breakfast-room, leaving her father and Julia together.

"How close Alice is grown!" said Julia, in a peevish tone. "I declare there is no pleasure in her society at all—there is no such thing as getting any thing out of her."

"Is she?" said Mr. Graham. "I don't see that."

"I am sure I wonder you do not, papa. Now, for instance, with regard to this letter, any one else would have talked it over with us; but Alice thinks it necessary to be mysterious."

"Oh, a mystery, is it? Ah—I see. Then it is not about John Bailey's farm, after all. I thought she said it was. Eh, Julia? I believe it was, do you know?"

"Dear me, papa, how your head does run upon that tiresome man's farm! Alice's letter is not about that, to be sure. But I have my suspicions what it is about. Have you not remarked what a flirtation has been

going on between Alice and George Shenstone, for some time past?"

"Flirtation? No, not I," said Mr. Graham.

"That is because you never pay any attention to such things; but I can assure you that it has been evident enough to me, whatever it may have been to you."

"But Alice is engaged to Arthur Ashmont," said Mr. Graham, "is not she?"

"Yes, she is; but I suppose ——— In short, it is not my business to account for it, but I am very much mistaken if that letter is not a proposal of marriage from George Shenstone to Alice."

"But I thought you said the letter was a very long one!"

"So it was."

"Then it could hardly be a proposal, for a man never could fill more than two sides of paper in proposing to a woman, I should think."

"Oh, but he might have a great deal more to tell about his prospects, or what not. Take my word for it, there is something of the kind in the wind, and when it is published at Charing Cross, I suppose we shall be admitted into the confidence."

Mr. Graham wondered, and said nothing for a few minutes; but John Bailey and his farm not having yet been dismissed from his mind, he presently said, "Julia, you have not been to John Bailey's farm for some time. I should like to shew it to you, and I also want

your opinion and advice, as to whether I shall give it to William Benson, when John Bailey's lease is out. Will you walk over there now?"

But Julia, though tempted for a moment to agree to a proposal which promised her an occasion of offering advice, yet disliked so exceedingly the never-ending conversations which ensued whenever Mr. Graham visited his farmers, that she excused herself, and advised him to request her sister to accompany him. On Alice therefore devolved the office of companion, and they sallied forth to John Bailey's farm.

John Bailey was a specimen of that almost obsolete article, an English farmer, uncontaminated by the new fashions the world has witnessed. His wife did not wear a cap trimmed with lace, blonde, or ribbon. His daughters could not play upon the piano-forte, nor did his sons ride a-hunting. The former occupied themselves in attending to household concerns, in milking the cows, and making the butter; and their greatest enjoyment was derived from their annual visit to the fair of a neighbouring county town. The latter were busied in following their father's avocations, in the hope, that one day, like him, they would rent a farm.

Bailey had given Mr. Graham notice of his intention to relinquish his farm at the expiration of his lease. His father had lately died at an advanced age, and the landlord of the farm where the old man had ended his days, a gentleman whose estate joined a part of Mr. Graham's, had proposed to John Bailey

to become his tenant, in the room of his father. In addition to other pleasant qualities, John was much attached to the place of his birth, and eagerly accepted the offer made him.

"Well, Bailey," said Mr. Graham, as he approached the farmer, who was standing looking at the progress of one of his ploughs, driven by his son, "so you are about to leave us."

John was a great talker, and delighted in the prospect of a chat.

"Why yes, Sir," said he, "I does not know how it is, but I cannot *resist* going back to that ere place, now I have an opportunity; and as my poor old father's gone to, I think I can't do better than go and take care of my mother, without routing her out of her old place, poor soul. Why, Sir, no wonder I likes Thorn farm; there's them plantations of oak (there's two on 'em, Sir, you know), I see them planted myself, when I was no bigger than *that*; and now they are growing up so nice. If I goes and lives there, Sir, now, I shall have the thinning on 'em, and they will be rare pleasant cutting."

"I am afraid," said Mr. Graham, "I shall never meet with so good a tenant as yourself, John, to rent this farm. This land has improved wonderfully in your hands."

"I certainly *do* know a thing or two," said John, chuckling. "And——"

"What do you mean to sow this field with?"

"Why, Sir, as I am not a-going to leave for these eight or ten months, I shall sow some wheat; but the birds make terrible havock, Sir. I am obliged to send my five little ones into the field, and set them a screaming to frighten them away; but that will hardly do, Sir, though the little rogues enjoys the fun heartily, I can assure you. Though they almost stuns me and my wife, the birds does not mind it, not they; so I must get a dozen of scarecrows, and see what that will do. I teazes my wife, sometimes, Sir, and says to her, 'Look ye, wife, you shall be scarecrow the first, and then I should not wonder if I need not get no more;' and that makes her so mad, Sir, and then I laughs, and then she is all the madder. We loves a joke, Sir, now and then; wife and me. Ha! ha!"

And before Mr. Graham and Alice could edge in a word, as they fondly hoped in the pause which followed the hearty laugh at his own joke, John went on.

"But as I was a saying, Sir, the birds is very apt to do mischief to the grain; not the rooks, Sir, I does not mean them, they does good on the contrary; they picks up the grubs as fast as we turns them up with the share; but they does n't get a living by that means neither, we have not grubs enough here for them; they goes every day and gets their living in Hampshire and then comes back and roosts in Asia" (a wood on Mr. Graham's estate called by that name).

Alice now began to think John Bailey's oration

was to be eternal, and gently suggested to her father to pursue their walk. But the farmer had no intention of parting with them so soon.

"I am sure Miss Graham would take pleasure in looking at my farm-yard," said he. "Do me the favour, Ma'am, to walk this way; I have got some beautiful pigs. I will venture to say you will be gratified with what I am a-going to shew you."

Alice was in for it; and under the necessity of following the loquacious farmer into the piggery.

"There, ma'am," said he, triumphantly pointing to a herd of little curly-tailed creatures trotting and cantering about their sty, and ever and anon giving a grunt of recognition as their master called and spoke to them. "There, ma'am, if *that* is not a fine litter, all I can say is, I don't know what is. There is their mother in the next place; but she'll never give us such another litter. She is inclinable for to be so very lusty that we can't keep her thin no ways, though what we gives her would starve another sow. There is another sow there, ma'am; you can't see her at this moment, but she's a fine creature to look at. That ere eats her pigs. She is a fine creature! You shall get a sight of her, ma'am; I'll have her out for you to look at. Here, Ben! Ben! I say."

"Brother Ben is gone down to Shenstone House, father," said a little urchin, running out of the farmhouse, with a kitten under one arm and a puppy on the other.

"What's he gone there for?"

"Because Mr. Jones, the wally, told him his mistress was took dreadful ill, father; and he went down for to see whether he could be of any use, to carry messages or——"

"Mrs. Shenstone dreadfully ill" exclaimed Alice and Mr. Graham at the same moment, "what does this mean?"

The farmer had received no intelligence of the kind; and Mr. Graham and his daughter taking leave without further delay, hastened home, expecting to hear either a confirmation, or a refutation, of the report which had just reached them. Their expectations were well founded. On the hall table, a note directed in George's hand-writing, was the first object that presented itself. It contained the account of a sudden paralytic affection with which his mother had been seized, and an earnest entreaty to Alice to repair to Shenstone House, the poor invalid having no female friend but herself within reach, and her married daughters being at so great a distance that a considerable time must necessarily elapse previous to their arrival. Alice lost no time in setting off to visit her friend; and in her anxiety for the safety of Mrs. Shenstone, forgot for the moment, that in all probability her explanation with George must take place.

Though considerably alarmed at the summons she had received, Alice was nevertheless unprepared for the case being one of extremity. Mrs. Shenstone was,

indeed, in the last stage of existence; and it was not expected she could survive the night. Her son was in the utmost affliction; and Alice had need of all her powers of consolation to restore him to comparative ease. Mrs. Shenstone appeared sensible, though speechless. She pressed Alice's hand in token of gratitude and affection; and as George knelt on one side the bed and Alice on the other, she gently joined their hands, forgetful, perhaps, in the hour of death, of the obstacle to a marriage she had long ardently desired, and conscious only of the happiness such an event would confer on her beloved son. Alice felt George's hand tremble as it was placed in her own; and contemplating his pale and sorrowful countenance as he gazed on his expiring parent, she had not the heart to withdraw hers; but left it there, an earnest of friendship unimpaired by the recital she had heard from him. George understood her. One moment he averted his eyes from the varying features of his mother; and as they met Alice's glance, he there read a confirmation of the hope he entertained. Alice was still his friend; though aware of the iniquity of his early life, she had not cast him off. The tide of his mother's life was ebbing fast; but that mother would not leave him alone in the world, he had still a friend left, and one to whom he could speak unreservedly and without disguise. These thoughts for a while crossed the young man's mind; but they soon reverted to the scene before them. Mrs. Shenstone lingered still,

though without the prospect of amendment ; and the following morning she breathed her last in the arms of her son and of her friend.

CHAPTER X.

Farewell ! forget me not, when others gaze
Enamoured on thee, with the looks of praise ;
When weary leagues before my view are cast,
And each dull hour seems heavier than the last,
Forget me not. May joy thy steps attend,
And mayest thou find in every form a friend ;
With care unsullied be thy every thought,
And in thy dreams of home, forget me not !

AFTER the last duties had been performed, Mr. Graham invited Shenstone to join their party at Graham Court, that a change of scene might mitigate the melancholy impression of what he had lately gone through. The invitation was gratefully accepted, and George became an inmate of the family. During the long period of his stay, Alice and himself had ample time and opportunity for conversation. The melancholy events which had followed his disclosure to her had brought them together on so sisterly a footing, that there existed much less embarrassment between them than she apprehended. They fully explained themselves, talked over their respective situations, and

thoroughly understood each other. To his inquiries as to the impression produced upon her by the recital of his adventures, she replied with candour; nor did she deny that the perusal was accompanied with considerable pain. She confessed that though prepared for grievous misdemeanours, her imagination had not pictured to itself so much guilt; but nevertheless, though sad was the story, his remorse and repentance had in her eyes completely washed out his guilt, as, she devoutly hoped, they had done in the sight of a higher authority than an earthly one.

"I never," said she, "can harbour aversion for the perpetrator of sins long since repented of, however heinous they may have been. Those, whatever may have been their former errors, who have been borne to the shrine of virtue, after passing through the ordeal of sincere contrition and repentance, are, in my opinion, far greater objects of respect, than those who, having perhaps been equally guilty, have subsequently become respectable in their behaviour, and faultless in the eyes of society, not because right and wrong now appear to them through the medium of duty in a religious or moral point of view, but merely because they have made the discovery, that in the long run, such conduct is found to answer best."

It may be said with some truth, that it is not the province of Society to interfere in the actions of individuals, which concern her not; that, provided her established forms and regulations are adhered to, every

one should be equally well received. The standard of morality set up by society, however, is very low; so low that a man stained with many vices, but who contrives to keep clear of transgressions punishable by the legislature, or of the proscribed few which society does visit with her censure—who violates every commandment in the Decalogue, excepting those the breach of which is taken cognizance of by the laws of the land,—that man, provided he give good entertainments or (which covers a multitude of sins) be an agreeable companion,—that man finds himself courted to the utmost extent of his desires, nor is his mode of life in the slightest degree called in question.

*L'agréable couvre tout; il rend tout légitime;
 Aujourd'hui dans le monde on ne connaît qu'un crime,
 C'est l'ennui; pour le fuir tous les moyens sont bons.*

In the constitution of society it may perhaps be difficult to order things otherwise; nevertheless, it is probable that much mischief is done by this indiscriminate mode of treatment. Many, who are not deterred from misdeeds by principle, might be induced to take a right course, did they find that through that medium they enjoyed a higher consideration in society; and though certainly, as far as the individual is concerned, the motive here is worthless enough, yet good habits acquired, no matter how, must necessarily be of service to the community; and there is always the possibility that those very good habits may ulti-

mately have the effect of creating a change in heart as well as life.

It could not but be expected that George's protracted residence at Graham Court after his mother's death, must confirm the general notion in the neighbourhood, that, at the expiration of the usual time of mourning for Mrs. Shenstone, her son would "lead Miss Alice Graham to the hymeneal altar," according to the esteemed form of expression made use of on these occasions. Although Alice, to the reiterated congratulations of the neighbours, always distinctly denied the possibility of any such event, she was not successful in gaining for her asseveration the credit her general character for veracity would seem to deserve. Like the inimitable Mr. Collins, of Hunsford fame, in his conduct towards Elizabeth Bennet, they did not pay her the compliment of believing what she said; and, like him, they thought that her modesty, in disclaiming an engagement so advantageous in every way, "so far from doing her any disservice, rather added to her other perfections."*

Julia who was as often congratulated and more often questioned than her sister, generally answered in no very gentle tone, that she knew nothing about the matter—information which seemed to confirm the curious in their preconceived opinion.

One morning Mrs. D., one of their more distant

* See "Pride and Prejudice."

neighbors, took the opportunity of a very fine day to call at Graham Court, so timing her visit as effectually to prevent the family from taking their intended ride or drive. To Alice, as the younger sister, devolved the duty of entertaining Miss D. who had accompanied her mother, and aware that it was far easier to do so in the open air, where flowers, wind, sun, mud, and dust, all become eligible topics to discuss upon, when once they were well outside the house, Alice made no delay in proposing to show her the shrubbery and flower-garden, which proposal being accepted, Mrs. D. and Julia were left *tête-à-tête* in the drawing-room.

"My object in driving over this morning, Miss Graham," said Mrs. D. is to offer my congratulations on your sister's approaching marriage to Mr. Shennstone; a charming young man, I understand!"

"Very much so," answered Julia; "but I am not aware he is to be married to my sister."

"Bless me! I beg ten thousand pardons! Is it possible I can be labouring under a mistake, and that to yourself, Miss Graham, my congratulations should have been offered?"

"Heighho!" said Julia. "No, to neither of us; but, as far as the opinion of the neighbourhood is concerned, yours is in accordance with it. I am constantly plagued with unceasing felicitations from all quarters; and though I have been at the trouble both of writing and speaking my denial, I might, it seems,

as well have been silent, for every one makes it a point to disbelieve what I say."

Poor Mrs. D. was quite taken aback with this rebuff. Having heard that Miss Alice Graham was going to be married, and that both bride and bridegroom were perfectly charming (for when young ladies are about to be married, their merits are always discovered to be transcendent, though with the gentleman it is rather the reverse), in the innocence of her heart she had driven over as in duty bound, to do the right thing, in a neighbourly manner; but the poor lady came quite unprepared for the reception she met with from Julia. Scarcely knowing what reply to give, or how to make any defence for the charge brought against her in common with so many others, she gathered up her cloak, beckoned in her daughter, and departed, much to the delight of the departing and the remaining. Scarcely knowing what construction to put on what had passed, she pretended not to unravel the whole mystery, retaining however entire conviction that the marriage would take place. Her opinion was divided as to whether Julia's ruffled temper betokened an unsuccessful competition with her sister for the prize, or that the young gentleman had hitherto delayed the important question, and that her congratulations were consequently premature.

But although these occurrences may appear trivial, and the incident of the family being overwhelmed with felicitations for which there existed no reason, may

seem little deserving of attention, it may be conceived that their frequent recurrence became annoying to Alice, and distressing to Shenstone; and it was evident that as long as the latter remained at Graham Court, the report of their marriage must obtain confirmation in spite of the denials of its inmates. After many a struggle, poor George determined, in justice to Miss Graham, to absent himself, and announced his intention of leaving Graham Court.

"So Mr. Shenstone is going?" said Julia, (who was by no means pleased with this arrangement), to her sister on the day when it was announced.

"Yes," replied Alice, "he is to leave us to-morrow."

"It is a great pity he goes away," said Julia.

"Surely," rejoined Alice, "it is far better that he should leave us, than that he and ourselves should be constantly annoyed by the unceasing congratulations of every one we meet?"

"Then you have made up your mind not to marry him?"

"My dear Julia, are you not aware that I am no longer a free agent?"

"Yes—but Mr. Shenstone is so much better a match than Arthur, and then, he being in India—together it seems useless waiting any longer. I should have thought Mr. Shenstone would have done much better for you."

To this luminous speech, and made probably with a view of feeling her ground, Alice made no reply.

Presently Julia added: "It is very singular that Mr. Shenstone should have remained here so long, if his intentions are not serious towards *either* of us. Though *you* are engaged to be married, Alice, you know every body is not; and I really do not see why you should send away Mr. Shenstone, only because the congratulations of your friends do not amuse you. I dare say he does not mind it, and I am sure I do not. Besides, if you would but make public your engagement with Arthur, then it would be known that Mr. Shenstone's attentions cannot be directed to you. I must confess, I see no reason why he should be driven from the house in this manner."

A new light here broke upon Alice, and she was revolving in her mind a suitable reply to make her sister, when she was saved the trouble by the entrance of Mr. Shenstone.

"I was telling my sister," said Julia, "that I thought it a great pity that you should leave us just now. I know not what papa will do without you."

"I shall leave Mr. Graham in such good company," said George, "that I can hardly flatter myself I shall be missed. I have determined to travel. There are many places in Europe, and out of it, I am anxious to visit, and I cannot do better than take the present opportunity of doing so."

"Where do you think of going to in the first instance?" asked Julia.

"To India," answered he, and bent his eyes on Alice.

"To India!" repeated both the sisters, the voices of each bearing intonations of surprise.

Julia's astonishment and annoyance vented themselves in the exclamation: "How can you go to India to be broiled, and to catch the cholera? And all alone too, without any one to take care of you!"

But Alice's found no vent in words. In Shenstone's sudden determination to go to India, she discerned a desire of forming an acquaintance with Arthur, and of being of service to him for her sake. She thought so highly of George, that she felt convinced, should this be his motive, he would so far sacrifice his own feelings as to promote her marriage with Arthur by the best means in his power. Nor was she mistaken. George could not conceal from himself that a further residence under the same roof with Alice, could serve only to feed a passion which must be forever hopeless. After a grievous struggle with himself, he formed the resolution to search out Arthur, and for the sake of the woman whom he loved more than his own life, make the means he possessed, instrumental to the union of that woman to the husband of her choice.

CHAPTER XI.

I grant indeed that fields and flocks have charms
For him that grazes, or for him that farms.

CRAEBE.

THE morning which was to be Shenstone's last at Graham Court, dawned cold and with a drizzling rain. His departure having been fixed at an early hour, he had taken leave of the family the preceding evening, with what melancholy feelings will be easily understood.

From the period of his return from America, he had scarcely quitted his mother; and his sisters, married in a distant part of the country, had seldom been able to visit Shenstone House, whilst the delicate state of Mrs. Shenstone's health had made it difficult for her to undertake a long journey for the purpose of seeing them. George had resolved never to leave his mother for any period exceeding two or three days; and the result of these combined circumstances was, that he had little in common with his sisters, who were considerably older than himself. His affections had been centered on his mother and on Alice; from the one he was severed by death, from the other by circumstances nearly as fatal as the fell destroyer.

On the occasion, however, of his intended long absence from home, he had determined to visit his sisters previously to his departure, and for this purpose he left Graham Court with the intention of returning thither no more, but, his visits concluded, of immediately quitting England. With what sinking of the heart he took leave of Alice, is better imagined than described. He went forth a wanderer, and the cheerless prospect was his of seeking in new countries, and amongst new faces, those social ties, without which existence to the generality is devoid of happiness or pleasure.

At seven o'clock on a November morning, he descended to the drawing-room from his own apartment, there to await the breakfast, which was preparing for him previous to his departure. The grey twilight which precedes sunrise afforded enough of melancholy light to render useless the candle he had brought from his room. There are few things so thoroughly uncomfortable as the aspect of a drawing-room by twilight in the morning, before the all-healing hand of the housemaid has done its work of patching up the gaps between the table and chairs, restoring the symmetrical order of the books, workbags, newspapers, inkstands, with which tables are usually so completely laden, and which the company of the preceding evening have displaced. The candles nearly burnt to their sockets, a latent whiff of lampoil as he crossed the passage, and a distant glimpse

of a blue gown and white linen petticoat, hastily vanishing at one door as he entered at the other, told the story that the footman was in the act of carrying off the lamp which had been barely extinguished the night before, and that he had disturbed the housemaid in her labours, which the grate filled with black cinders, and fender dragged away from the hearth, the rug turned up, a duster, a huge black gauntlet, a coal scuttle, and an unextinguished tallow candle, told him were not nearly concluded. In this abode of discomfort did he pace to and fro, until, having dispatched his breakfast, he bade adieu, a long adieu to scenes where he had first found comfort and peace of mind. As George's carriage drove from the door, a looker-on might have seen, peeping through the half-closed window shutters of an upper room, a head bristling with papillottes innumerable. The window was that of Julia's room, but no responsive longing lingering look was cast behind from the carriage door; for he who departed, well knew that Alice's room looked to the garden front.

The iron lodge-gates had just been heard to close behind the carriage, when Mr. Graham, in flowered dressing-gown, green slippers, and wigless, shuffled into the hall, fondly hoping to catch his young friend, and once more shake him by the hand. But the servant informed him he was gone, leaving a letter, which he produced. It contained grateful acknowledgments to Mr. Graham for the kindness with which he had

been treated, and an inclosure for Alice, which her father retained for the purpose of delivery when they should meet at the breakfast table.

"I was not in time to see Shenstone before he went," said Mr. Graham as he sat down, "but he left letters for us."

"For me?" asked Julia.

"No, not for you, July, but for Alice and for me. Here they are. Mine is an exceeding proper one, indeed. He is a very nice young man. I should be much pleased to have him for a son-in-law; but I scarcely know how it is, he certainly did not take to us. A very odd thing. He would have made an excellent husband for you, Julia. Eh?"

This remark did not suit the current of Julia's reflections at that moment; and, to change the conversation, she asked her sister what were the contents of her letter.

"Mr. Shenstone takes leave of us all for ever," said Alice, her voice betraying some emotion, and "desires kindly to be remembered to you, Julia."

"And is that *all*?" said Julia, in a tone of disappointment.

"The remainder of the letter refers to other things," answered Alice. And it did indeed contain allusions to what had passed between them on the subject of his former life, which she did not consider herself authorized to mention.

Provoked at having no letter herself, but merely a

message of the most common-place description, a message to which many persons have been heard to say they would infinitely prefer a *pin*, Julia broke forth in peevish accents:—

“Well, I must say, I never heard of a young lady who had so many secrets with a young gentleman as you have, Alice. Indeed, if you were on the point of marriage with Mr. Shenstone, you could scarcely have a more apparently intimate connection; and all the while you are engaged to be married to another man!”

Alice felt the truth of the remark, and replied, “It is true that, from living so much together as we have done, a greater degree of intimacy appears to have sprung up between us than does in reality exist; and it was, therefore, time to put a stop to the reports prevalent in the neighbourhood, by his departure.”

“It might be very well to absent himself for a time, but I own I cannot see why he should be banished for ever.”

“That is a point, Julia, I conceive we must leave entirely to his own discretion.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Graham, “if he *will* go, July, you know we cannot help it, though I certainly do agree with you that it is very bad taste in him not to like us all a little better. You see you were quite wrong, my dear, in what you told me some time back” (with a wink to one daughter, and a nod at the other).

“That is as it may be, papa,” answered Julia. “I am sure you cannot deny that Mr. Shenstone was

anxious enough to shew attention to *one* of us, and I must say that folks who are already provided with affianced lovers, should not lay themselves out to attract away from those who are not, attentions which are legitimate in the one case, but not in the other."

Poor Alice hid her diminished head on hearing this philippic, evidently aimed at herself. However imprudently in her own case, or unfairly towards Shenstone she might have acted, her conscience as regarded Julia was perfectly clear. She knew full well that George had never given to any other individual the slightest indications of preference for Julia, and that nothing was ever further from his thoughts than to pay her any attentions which were not due, according to the laws of good breeding and society, from all men to all women. She, therefore, made no answer. Mr. Graham, whose attention was diverted from his boiled egg by the sharp tone of his eldest daughter, looked at both of them, hoping to gather from their countenances the meaning of this mysterious speech, which he did not venture to request in the simple form of a question. But Alice was busily employed in replenishing the teapot, and Julia's habitually forbidding expression had suffered little apparent alteration.

"Disappointed he returned to his *boil'd egg* again."

George Shenstone once departed, and with him the excitement and interest produced by the society of all individuals to whom certain circumstances of mystery attach; (to say nothing of his own peculiar character

of the admirer of one sister and the wished-for of the other,) the Graham family relapsed into the calm and quiet of a country life, diversified only by the slender variety occasioned by the good or bad behaviour of village *protégés*, and the consequent visits of approbation or remonstrance of the young ladies; or of those cases so difficult to decide as to whether the afternoon should be devoted to riding, driving, or walking. In this placid state we will leave them, and having so long lost sight of Arthur Ashmont, restore him to that place in the narrative to which, as the preferred of the heroine, he is clearly entitled,

CHAPTER XII.

I can, Petruchio, help thee to a wife
 With wealth enough, and young and beauteous,
 Brought up as best becomes a gentlewoman.

* * * * *

—Were my state far worse than it is,
 I would not wed her for a mine or gold.

TAMING OF THE SHREW.

We left Arthur on the point of setting sail for India, having accepted the invitation of his uncle, Mr. Middleton, in the hope that that invitation would procure him the means of realizing such a sum as might ana-

ble him to return and claim the hand of Alice Graham.

Mr. Middleton was half-brother to Lady Jane Ashmont, and had spent the greater part of his life in Bombay. Originally sent thither as a means of acquiring a provision which his family at home had been unable to afford him, he had contrived by considerable perseverance and application, to amass a small capital, which having had an accidental opportunity of vesting in a most advantageous manner, he obtained a sufficient increase to induce him to embark as a merchant in his own behalf, and at his own personal risk. In process of time, and by a series of fortunate circumstances, he succeeded in realizing a very considerable fortune. But still unwilling either to leave a place which had now become a second home to him, or to give up the occupations and pursuits which were to him a second nature, he determined to end his days on the soil where he had taken root, and to seek for a partner of those labours which, however willing he might be to share with another, he could not resolve entirely to renounce.

Although practically estranged from the country which had given him birth, he had never entirely lost sight of it. He maintained a regular correspondence with his sister and his other relations, and was in the constant habit of sending them gifts of all descriptions. From long habits of exercising supreme authority and control over his dependants, and in a country too

where persons are salaamed and prostrated to, until they are inclined to fancy themselves more like gods than men, he had acquired a degree of imperiousness and aversion to contradiction, which did not always contribute to making him the most agreeable companion in the world. There was, however, a drollery and eccentricity of expression and ideas about him, which, so long as he had his own way, did not militate against the entertainment of his family circle, or that of the society of which he saw a considerable portion at his own house.

Soon after his arrival in Bombay he had pounced upon a pretty girl, arrived in a cargo with many others, to search for husbands. Being comely in person, and promising as to station and prospects, his wooing was not of long duration. She came, he saw, and conquered; and Miss Louisa North became Mrs. Middleton in a shorter space of time than such matters are usually concluded in the mother country. Mrs. Middleton proved to be gentle and meek, and as such admirably calculated to suit her husband; she thought him the first of human beings, and invariably agreed with every proposition that he advanced.

At the period of Arthur Ashmont's arrival in India, their family consisted of three daughters, in point of age, trembling on the brink of *oldmaid-ism*, in other respects amiable, pleasing, and gentle as their mother. To the numerous proposals which their father's station, or their personal attractions, had procured for them

amongst the large portion of wifeless gentlemen, so peculiarly abounding in the continent of India, Mr. Middleton had hitherto invariably turned a deaf ear. One was too poor ; another had a bad temper ; a third was a book worm—he could not endure a bookworm. Thus though many most unexceptionable men had presented themselves, and some even with the full permission of the ladies in question, his daughters remained unmarried, much to Mr. Middleton's satisfaction, who hugged himself as he thought his children were still there to enliven his home, and "What did it signify? He should provide handsomely for them at his death. Why should they marry at all? There was plenty of time to think of marriage, and the latter young ladies changed their condition the better. The upshot of such a measure must be that they would have endless numbers of children, and as children never thrive in India, they would find it necessary to quit it; and that would never do. He could not exist without his daughters, and surely no one had so good a right to their society as himself. There was no doubt that, all things considered, it was far better that they should remain single."

Thus reasoned the old gentleman; nor did it ever once occur to him that it was possible these said daughters might have some fixed choice as to matrimony. He had been so long accustomed to perfect submission from those who surrounded him, that he considered his own opinion as law and gospel; and to

presume to differ on such vital points, was as unheard-of as that the sun should alter in his course.

To this singular old gentleman Arthur was introduced through the medium of a letter from his mother. He found him established in a comfortable and luxurious dwelling. Spacious verandahs surrounded the house, deserving rather the name of galleries than that of the scanty green pent-house, which in this country serves too often to exclude that small portion of sun which it is seldom desirable even so much as to mitigate. In these verandahs, filled with delicious flowers, and looking upon a garden stocked with numberless plants, which in our country are cultivated with sedulous industry and carefully preserved in our hot-houses, but which in India meet the eye at every turn, flourishing in gardens, or springing up wild in the fields,—in this delicious spot, Arthur found Mr. Middleton and his family seated.

The perusal of Lady Jane's letter soon gave her brother all the requisite information, and his reception of Arthur was kind and cordial in consequence. When the usual inquiries after all at home had been gone through, and the replies obtained, Mr. Middleton said to his daughter, "Anne, ring the bell for a boy." The bell was rung, and an individual, whose age approached seventy years, made his appearance.

"Hunmuntoo," said Mr. Middleton, "set the punkahs a-going in the tiffin-room, and desire the shirabdar and the khansamun to hasten hither."

This, to Arthur, wholly unintelligible order, was promptly obeyed, and two individuals answered the summons.

"It is my wish," said Mr. Middleton, "this day to give a burrah tumashee. This burrah sahib has done me the honour to visit me, and I desire that everything be got ready in the best style. After tiffin let the gharee, the ghareewar, and the ghorawallas be in readiness. Let the lascars have their wits about them, as they may also be wanted. I also desire that the mollee shall meet me at the garden gate as soon as the sun is down. Let care be taken that this burrah sahib's dolyment have as good treatment as the burrah sahib himself. In the meanwhile the tiffin must be put on the table, and take care that neither the abdars nor the punkahs be forgotten, and that the hookah burdars be on the spot immediately afterwards."

The shirabdar and the khansamun salaamed and vanished. They had no sooner shut the door than Mr. Middleton looked at Arthur, winked at his daughters, looked at Arthur again, and then burst into a loud fit of laughter. Arthur, whose risible faculties were something excited by the unusual string of orders he had just heard, and the novel employment of so many substances, the sound of which struck his ear for the first time, howbeit they called themselves English, with difficulty restrained himself from echoing his uncle's laughter, and was not a little at a loss to

know what to do. But Mr. Middleton, when the fit had expended itself, presently relieved him.

"Well, my boy, what do you think of that, hey? I am a queer old chap, am I not? to treat a new comer in such a fashion? To talk gibberish half an hour and then laugh in his face, eh? But methought I would surprise a griffin like you, with a taste of the language we speak here; and you thought it queer enough, I warrant, hey?"

"May I ask, Sir, the meaning of the word *griffin*?" said Arthur, who speedily saw he had to deal with an eccentric old gentleman, who meant no rudeness, but who had a singular idea of a joke. "With us, that term conveys the notion of a frightful old woman; and I hope I may flatter myself that it does not apply to me in that sense. As for the other incomprehensible expressions I have heard to day for the first time, I must apply to my cousins for a lesson at some future period."

"Yes, yes, they'll teach you all in good time. A griffin is the name a man goes by during the first year of his residence. But it is only my-fun. Don't suppose that is the way we talk. No, no, we speak good honest English, but I had a mind to astonish a griffin's weak mind, that's all—eh?"

Arthur was excessively amused at his uncle's oddity, and they soon became excellent friends. The tiffin orders had now taken effect, and they were presently ushered into a room where was laid a table spread with every description of delicious fruit. The

room was freshened by the moving to and fro of a punkah, or frame work of canvass, by means of ropes pulled by attendants, and which produced a most agreeable breeze.

"Well, young man," said Mr. Middleton to his nephew soon after the party was seated, "I am glad you are come out to pay us a visit here in India, eh? Had a horror of it, I dare say, eh? Thought it the greatest infliction ever put upon man, no doubt, eh? That is how all you youngsters come out to us, hating it like poison. Then they get devilish good wives, and make devilish good fortunes, and are as happy as need be, until they have a parcel of children. Then madam finds out the brats cannot thrive, and they must go to England, upon which they are in the lamentations of Jeremiah at going; almost as sorry to leave India as they were to set a foot in it. A pack of fools, I think."

"It is natural enough, Sir," said Arthur, "that those who, contrary to their expectations, have found themselves well off in this country, should be little disposed to quit it; for to return to a place from which our habits are estranged, and our ties in all probability lamentably relaxed, without some strong personal inducement, is melancholy enough. The case is very similar with those who go out to India, with this difference in their favour, that they are usually sent thither at so early an age as to have had little or no opportunity of forming any very intimate connections." And he sighed as he reflected how little the case he

was drawing out for the generality, was applicable to himself.

"Aye," said Mr. Middleton, "I never would listen to Mrs. M. when she wanted me to go back to England with the girls. She would hold me in a chapter sometimes about liver, complexion, and what not, but I said to her, 'Nonsense!' says I, 'fiddlestick!' and I convinced her I was right, did not I, my dear? Look at those girls! there they are, the picture of health!" And he pointed to his daughters, whose sallow skin, and slender and debilitated forms, bespoke that the sharp attacks of fever, and the other complaints incidental to that climate, had made considerable inroads on their constitutions. "Could any thing," Mr. Middleton went on,— "Could any thing have been more absurd than taking these girls to England? They are far better here, far better."

"I should have liked very much to see England, papa," said Anne, timidly.

"See England! Pooh, nonsense, you are much better here. There's nothing to see in England. Nothing but a few green fields and a parcel of towns, filled with frightful brick houses. There is no sun, and it is *so* damp! Take my word for it you are far better off where you are." The young ladies were silent, and the meal concluded.

Arthur shortly became entirely domesticated in his uncle's house; his easy temper and agreeable manners soon ingratiated him so much in Mr. Middleton's good opinion, that he became his favourite and facto-

turn. A few months had scarcely elapsed before Arthur saw himself installed in a situation of much trust. The greater part of the management of Mr. Middleton's commercial arrangements was confided to his care. In a year's time it was determined that he should become a regular partner in the concern, and in the meantime his uncle gave him a most liberal salary, until he should have acquired such habits of work as should enable him to assume the contemplated principal share. His first care on this sudden accession of affluence, was to endeavour to realize that hope in which he had left his own country, namely, the hope of saving enough to ensure his marriage on his return, and Mr. Middleton's liberality seemed to warrant that he might find it easy to do so. But there were more difficulties in the execution of this plan than he was aware of. A younger brother, who in England rubs on with the smallest complement of servants, who often considers himself well off if he can contrive to keep an individual something between man and boy, or who much oftener is contented to do without either man or boy, in India finds himself suddenly surrounded by a host of domestics. He has his hammals,* his mussauls,† his ghorawallas,‡ his purbhors,§ his hookah-burdars,|| his khilmutgars,¶ his sirdar bearers,** his rons,†† and fifty more, none of

* Palanquin bearers.

† Lamp men.

‡ Persons who run by the side of horses to keep away flies.

§ Writers.

|| Smoking attendants.

¶ Footmen.

** Valets.

†† Messengers.

whom would hear of doing any thing but his own specific work. The necessity of retaining all these supernumerary personages, consequently runs away with much that it would be desirable to save for ulterior purposes, and Arthur found in a short time that these constant demands upon his purse would afford him little chance of realizing a sufficient sum of money before he and his love were about to descend into the vale of years. The prospect, however, of becoming a partner held out some better hopes, and he redoubled his assiduity that there might be no necessity for further delay on the ground of incapacity or ignorance, when the appointed time for his transfer should arrive.

Mr. Middleton's partiality for his nephew hourly increased. Arthur was his right hand; nothing was undertaken without his approbation, nor could a favourite son be treated with more consideration or kindness by Mr. Middleton. But this sudden violent affection was as ephemeral as it was vehement, and was subsequently productive of considerable annoyance to its object.

One day after the ladies had left the dining-table, Mr. Middleton and Arthur remaining alone, the former began :

"Arthur, of course you want a wife, eh?"

"Sir?" said Arthur taken by surprise.

"I say you want a wife, I suppose, don't you?"

"N—o, Sir," replied the young man, rather confused.

"What the devil! you don't want a wife? Yes you do. You *must* want a wife. You shall have one."

"I assure you, Sir," replied Arthur, who was by this time a little recovered from his surprise, "I assure you, Sir, I am engaged in no such search at present."

"Then you are the first man who has been six months in India and has not already thought of half a dozen. But pooh! stuff! you must want a wife; and if you do not now, you will before three months have gone over your head."

"I do not think there is the slightest probability of my forming any desire of the kind," said Arthur.

"Fiddlestick! I say you will, before three months are over. What! live in India and not want a wife? The thing is unheard of: What do you imagine shiploads of girls come over here every year for, but to provide wives for all you gentlemen who settle in India; and then to tell me you don't want a wife! You must want a wife!"

"I do not deny, Sir, that wives are most excellent things to have; I only intend to disclaim any desire of choosing one at present."

"What new whim is this?" thought Arthur, "am I going to be married to one of these speculative young ladies without my own consent?"

"Now listen to what I have to say," pursued Mr. Middleton, "and then I shall be much surprised if you tell me you do not want a wife. Do you know one thing? I have refused the offers of half a dozen men

who wanted to marry my daughter Anne. I did not like them; they were not men to suit my taste, and I would have nothing to do with them. My daughter Anne is a fine girl, a devilish fine girl, which you know as well as I do. Now listen. You shall have *her* for a wife! My daughter Anne, who has had half a dozen offers, and refused them all! What do you think of *that*? Now tell me, after this, that you do not want a wife!"

"Arthur was amazed and confounded, totally ignorant how to look, what to say. His cousin Anne was a most excellent girl, and at least ten years older than himself; a sober and steady maiden of some five and thirty years standing; and, had his heart and hand been ever so free, he did not think it probable that under any circumstances they would have been placed at Anne Middleton's disposal.

"Really, Sir, you are most kind," he stammered, "I am perfectly aware of my cousin Anne's great merits, and highly grateful to you for entertaining such advantageous projects for my welfare; but—I cannot think that your daughter looks upon me with so favourable an eye as to induce her——"

"Oh, never fear," interrupted Mr. Middleton, "I'll take care no difficulty is made in that quarter; besides, if there were, her sister Jane is to be had (named after your mother, by-the-bye); I refused four offers for her. I am not sure, indeed, that she might not suit you better. However, never fear. Anne will be too happy, I'll warrant; and I refused six offers for her."

"My dear Sir, I cannot think of imposing myself upon either, or any of your daughters. They look upon me in the light of a brother, cousin, anything in short but of an admirer; and I am under the full conviction that my addresses would be most unwelcome."

Mr. Middleton now grew angry.

"I tell you no. Don't you hear what I say? I say that either of them would be too happy. You don't mean to tell me, I suppose, that you will not marry my daughter Anne, when I have explained to you that you have my consent for doing so; and, let me tell you, that consent is no such easy matter to obtain. I have refused six husbands for one daughter, and four for the other. It so happens, that you suit me very well. You are to become my partner, and I look upon you as fixed here for my life; and as I have no mind to lose the society of my daughters, I mean you should marry one of them; and I can tell you, that in that case you are a made man, for I shall leave all my property to you and Anne at my death. What say you to it now, eh?"

Arthur heard this announcement in utter confusion and despair. He had left his own country in the hope of returning thither in a few years possessed of an independence. He found that his uncle, to whom he was greatly indebted for much kindness, was under the illusion, first, that he intended to pass the remainder of his life in India, and next, that his heart and hand were free, and himself ready to marry any one who was suggested to him. With these three notions,

though highly improbable in the case of a young man of three or four and twenty years of age, Mr. Middleton was thoroughly imbued; and Arthur thought with dismay, that to inform a partial and irascible old gentleman that he had no intention of staying with him longer than suited his own convenience, and that he had no taste for becoming the husband of his favourite daughter, was tolerable certain of producing a quarrel, which must in all probability prove fatal to his ulterior prospects. To qualify or to disguise such plain facts as these, seemed alike impossible; honour and honesty forbade him the latter course, and no ingenuity seemed equal to the former. Though these ideas floated through Arthur's brain with considerable rapidity, nevertheless a pause succeeded Mr. Middleton's last question which admitted of suspicion.

"Well man, you are in a brown study. Don't you twig? Can't you answer?"

"My dear uncle—" stammered Arthur, "I have not words—to express my gratitude—for your excessive kindness to me—of which I must fairly confess myself wholly unworthy—for—but—"

"Well, what is come to you? Are you going to sit palavering there for an hour about gratitude and unworthiness? Fiddlestick! I know very well what you want to say. You are surprised at my being willing you should become Anne's husband, after having refused so many for her, and you are most happy to marry her; only you don't exactly know how to

express yourself. I know very well that is it. But never mind, my lad, you are a good fellow, and I am sure my daughter Anne will be happy with you. Bless her!"

Arthur had now screwed up his courage to the sticking point.

"My dear sir, I cannot allow you any longer to remain in this delusion. I fear you will think I have too long been partaking of your hospitality, and reaping the benefit and pleasure of your kindness under false pretences, when I tell you that long before I left England for this country, my heart and faith were pledged to another, and that pecuniary difficulties alone prevented a marriage, which both honour and inclination forbid me to break off. I am greatly to blame in having concealed this from you; but, believe me, had I been in the slightest degree aware of your kind intentions in my favour, nothing should have prevented me from making you acquainted, long ere this, with the statement you have just heard. I have one consolation—namely, that however favourable may have been your opinion of me, that of neither of my cousins coincides with it to the degree which should make our union desirable. They have ever treated me with excessive kindness, but beyond that I am satisfied their partiality has not extended."

Whilst Arthur was speaking, Mr. Middleton's countenance testified mingled astonishment and anger—

"And quick his colour went and came,
As fear and rage alternate rose,"

"My daughters not coincide with me in opinion! Let me tell you, sir, they *always* coincide with me in opinion. But am I to understand that you do not choose to marry my daughter? That my daughter Anne is not good enough to please you, nor my daughter Jane either?"

"My dear uncle, I have ——"

"I wish for no more explanations, I wish only for a plain answer to a plain question. Am I to understand this, or am I not? You will perhaps do me the favour to return a plain answer. I conclude you are competent to do so?"

"Really, sir, it is very distressing to me——"

"It is very singular that, after having preached up to me my own kindness, so much longer than I was desirous of hearing of it, you cannot or will not reward me by granting my single boon of a plain answer to a simple question. May I be indulged with Yes, or No?"

Arthur, thus pushed to the wall, was under the necessity of pronouncing the required monosyllable, upon hearing which Mr. Middleton flung out of the room, causing the decanters and glasses to ring, as he banged the door out of which he made his exit.

Arthur was left in no very enviable frame of mind. His uncle was mortally offended; and as it was not to be presumed that having rejected a proffered alliance with either of his cousins, he should be very welcome in that quarter, sad and sorrowful, and in the distressing position of a man who finds himself en-

tangled in a scrape out of which he sees no mode of escape,—

“——unfriended, melancholy, slow,”

he betook himself to his own apartment, there to ruminate on the sudden change which had taken place in his hitherto brightening prospects. But here even fresh matter for reflection and agitation awaited him.

CHAPTER XIII.

Though smile and sigh alike are vain
 When several hearts repine,
 My spirit flies o'er moont and main
 And mourns in search of thine.

ARTHUR Ashmont had now been about ten months in Bombay. A correspondence as regular as it is possible to keep up between countries so distant as the continent of India and our small portion of the European territory, was carried on between the Graham family and Arthur. He was kept tolerably *au courant* of his mistress's movements; had heard of their departure from London, their protracted residence at Graham Court, and was informed of the life they had led, and the society they saw. Amongst the few intimates of Graham Court, he had as yet heard of none likely to rouse feelings of jealousy in his breast, were he inclined to that bad and selfish passion. By degrees,

however, the mention of the name of Shenstone so often recurred in his letters from ——shire, that he began to feel a little uneasy as to the degree of influence exercised by that individual over the mind of his betrothed. Shenstone had been described to him as a good-looking young man, possessed of a considerable fortune, and with a remarkable disposition to melancholy and reserve. Here was precisely the very character which is most likely to interest a young lady; and if that young lady chances to be of a romantic turn, her subjugation becomes nearly a matter of certainty, especially if the gentleman shows an inclination to relax towards her, and herself alone. He took refuge in the knowledge that his lady-love was *not* of a romantic turn, and in the hope (though he could think it scarcely a well-founded one) that Mr. Shenstone was insensible to the merits and charms by which he had himself been enthralled. Nay, he ventured to hope that as he decidedly passed a great portion of his time at Graham Court, and was evidently on the most intimate footing there, his future sister-in-law, Julia, might be the object of attentions he was satisfied must be directed to one or the other of the sisters. How far that hope was paralleled by Julia's wish, I leave my reader to determine.

"Julia is very handsome," thought he, "I dare say Shenstone is in love with her. And yet it is singular enough, I always hear of his saying *this* to Alice, and doing *that* with Alice. Being the elder sister, Julia might as well take upon herself the task of entertain-

taining strangers. Alice forgets.—Psha! nonsense! what am I thinking of? I believe I am going to be jealous. Certain as I am of Alice's affection, shall I doubt her plighted faith? Never."

Thus fortifying his mind against the uncomfortable impressions occasionally implanted in it by his English letters, though still not entirely divested of uneasiness, he endeavoured calmly to await the arrival of the next mail. In due time it came, and on his retreat to his apartment, at the close of the interview related in the last chapter, he found his table spread with letters from his various correspondents. The accustomed communication from Alice, though a long one, written with perfect ease, and indulging in the same confidential tone as before, had yet this variation: there was no mention of Shenstone in any way whatever. He had hoped to learn that his suit with Julia prospered, and that Alice was on the eve of acquiring a brother-in-law, whom she both esteemed and liked. But not a word in any way connected with him, was to be found in the whole letter, from the superscription to the postscript.

Amongst the packages addressed to him, was one, the direction of which he recognized as the hand-writing of a Lincoln's Inn friend, an associate of his labours in that region. He put it aside until he had perused the more interesting correspondence of his family and his betrothed; but these once despatched, he recurred to that of his Lincoln's Inn companion. It treated of various indifferent matters—London scandal—London

gossip. But there was one paragraph which thoroughly riveted his attention; it ran thus:—

“Do you remember two pretty Miss Grahams who were in London last season, daughters of an old cock who has, I am told, a devilish pretty place in ———shire? I am told the youngest is going to be married to a man she has picked up in her neighbourhood, a good-looking fellow, as I hear, of some 5 or £6,000 a-year, but a deuced deal too melancholy and gentleman-like to please me. I forget his name.”

“Confound the rattling fool!” ejaculated Arthur to himself. “What does he mean by this trash? Alice going to be married to a man she has picked up in her neighbourhood? What the devil does he mean?” and, throwing down the letter, he paced the room with quick and unmeasured steps. For the moment, all traces of the unpleasant discussion he had lately gone through with his uncle, vanished from his mind, and the contents of this unwelcome letter were alone present to it. As he became more calm, the identity of the individual named forcibly struck him. “It can be no other than Shenstone,” thought he, “melancholy—five thousand a-year—good-looking—in the neighborhood:—every thing tallies exactly with the description I have already received of him. Yet, Alice false—impossible. Alice to write to me in the strain of this letter, when she has accepted the addresses of another, and forever cast me off! I will never believe it.”

He turned to the date. Her's was considerably anterior to that of his London correspondent; his was written in the hurry of one who is aware that a ship is on the point of sailing; her's leisurely and calmly, in the style of a person who is aware of a sufficiency of time previously to the obligation of sending it off to London. There was a difference of ten days between the dates of the two letters, and in ten days how much might have happened. Unwilling to give credit to the news, fearful of rejecting it as false, he was distracted with doubts and fears.

To thee, Reader! who art necessarily and very properly behind the scenes, and fully aware of all that has taken place in England, these letters are, I trust, no subject of astonishment. Thou wilt readily combine in thine own mind, that so long as Alice remained in ignorance of George Shenstone's affection for herself, so long did she write about him as of any other individual with whom they were in the habits of intimacy; but once apprized of the state of his feelings towards her, and become the depository of his secret history, it was natural that, being forbidden by honour and delicacy to disclose either the one or the other, she should shroud herself in profound silence upon the subject. Thou art, moreover, aware, Reader, that within a few days of the reception of Shenstone's letter, Mrs. Shenstone's death took place, and that, nearly immediately after that event, his residence at Graham Court had given rise to those reports of which Arthur's friend, in profound ignorance

of the degree of interest his correspondent might attach to it, had sent him the unwelcome news.

In the course of the evening, the following note was sent up to him from Mr. Middleton:

"SIR,

"As I consider myself highly aggrieved by the information I received from you this evening, and as I presume that neither my society, nor that of my daughters (who, by your own confession, are not good enough to please you), can have any longer charms for you, it will probably be as agreeable to your wishes as my own, that we should part, though I have no particular desire to put you to more inconvenience, as to time, than is absolutely necessary. In the meantime, I will not further trouble you with the employment in my house, which has hitherto occupied your leisure hours.

"I am, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"JOHN MIDDLETON."

"Thus end my dreams of competence and happiness with Alice!" said Arthur mournfully to himself—"turned from my uncle's door, with no resource left me but to return to England, and to my old profession. Would that I had never left it—that I had never trusted to the invitations or professions of a madman, for such must my uncle most surely be, to have formed so absurd a plan, and to be so earnest in carrying it out."

rying it into execution, no matter whether with or without the concurrence of the parties concerned. And, as though this were not enough, I am tortured with suspicions of her faith! I am told she is to be married to another!"

It was vain to look for sleep that night, after the occurrence of such events. All night he lay tossing and forming plans for the future, his uncertainty, with regard to the constancy of the mistress of his affections imparting additional bitterness to these painful, though necessary reflections.

After a sleepless night, he rose, according to the Anglo-Indian custom, at four o'clock, to take his constitutional ride, before the sun should have forced him, in common with the rest, to retreat to the darkest corner he could find.

Though in no mood for society, his own thoughts were so uncomfortable, that he willingly accepted an invitation of joining some friends who were on their way to look at an English ship, which had just been descried as entering the port. With a light breeze she sailed majestically in, and cast anchor at a short distance from the land. All was soon bustle and confusion. Boats hastening to put off in the hope of landing passengers and luggage; questions bandied to and fro, as to her cargo, &c.; the air filled with the yells of the disputants, as to the prior right of each to the employment of their skiffs.

As Arthur and his companions sat on their horses gazing at this scene, a boat pulled on shore close to

the spot he occupied. It was filled with luggage, on some of which the name of "Shenstone" inscribed in large letters, suddenly struck his view. "Shenstone!" thought he, "the very name, and yet it cannot be?—some brother or cousin doubtless. Would it were, indeed, that very Shenstone whom I dread! but he is too fortunate a man to seek in India the happiness I have too much reason to fear is at this moment within his reach. However, I will investigate this matter." And he waited until the passengers disembarked with the intention of observing to whom these effects belonged. Presently a young man jumped on shore, and approached the position Arthur had taken up in the immediate vicinity of the packages which had attracted his attention. As a pretext for making his acquaintance, Arthur requested to know if he could be of any service in directing him to a hotel, as he was probably a stranger to the place. The stranger looked steadfastly at Arthur for a moment, and then thanking him, gratefully accepted his services. His luggage was speedily stowed away in a palâquin, and the two gentlemen proceeded together, Arthur having previously dismounted, and consigned his horse to the care of his servant.

As they walked on, Arthur burned to make enquiries of his new acquaintance; but how to open the subject with an entire stranger?

"Is it your intention to make some stay here, Mr. Shenstone?" he began.

"I believe that it is probable that I may do so," an-

swered his companion. "I am not bound to any particular place, but am merely come to see the country, its usages and inhabitants."

"May I be excused, sir," rejoined Arthur, "for asking what I fear may appear an impertinent question in so new an acquaintance, but which I have particular reasons for being desirous of putting; namely, whether you belong to the Shenstone family whose estate lies in —shire?" (naming the county in which was situated Graham Court).

The stranger made a gesture of surprise, and looking at Arthur, said—"I do certainly belong to that family; but, in my turn, may I ask your motive in putting the question?"

"I have some very dear friends in the neighbourhood of Shenstone House, and I was not without a hope, that in the event of your claiming some acquaintance with that family, I might be enabled to learn news of them."

"Do you allude to the Grahams of Graham Court, sir, may I ask?"

"I do," replied Arthur. "And I have heard," added he, hesitating, "that an individual bearing your surname, but with whose christian name I do not chance to be acquainted, is likely to become the husband of one of Mr. Graham's daughters?" And he looked earnestly in the stranger's face, as though to read his inmost thoughts.

"Before I answer you, allow me to put one question," said George, (for the reader is well aware tha

the *effects* which first introduced him to Arthur's notice, can belong to no other than himself), "have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Ashmont?"

"The same," replied Arthur.

"Then," said George mournfully, "I can inform you with perfect truth, that the reports you have heard relative to Miss Graham's marriage are false, and to the best of my knowledge, she has no matrimonial connection in view at present."

Arthur's heart leapt within him as he heard this welcome news; he could have fallen on his knees, and worshipped the bearer of such joyful tidings; and indeed with difficulty he refrained from grasping the stranger's hand, and pouring out his soul in rapturous acknowledgements for the benefit he had conferred. With how lightened a heart did he retrace his steps to his uncle's abode! How did he reproach himself for doubting his Alice's faith! Nay, so great was the exuberance of the moment, that he no longer remembered his quarrel with his uncle, and its probable results. Every thing was banished from his mind, but the simple fact that Alice, his own, his beloved, still was constant, still was true!

CHAPTER XIV.

They see the flash with sudden lightnings flare
And the blue smoke slow rolling on the air ;
They see their warriors drop, and starting hear
The lingering thunders bursting on their ear ;
Amazed, appall'd, the treacherous ambush fled
And raged, and curst their birth, and quaked with dread.

THE LUSAR.

DURING the short conversation which took place between Arthur and George, the latter had been made acquainted with two important facts ; namely, that Arthur was apprised of the reports circulated in England with regard to himself and Alice Graham, and that he was ignorant of the Christian name of her supposed admirer. Anxious for her sake, to cultivate the acquaintance of the man to whom in all probability her future fate would be intrusted, but unwilling to appear either an object of pity or a source of embarrassment, as a rejected suitor of the woman who favoured his new friend, he came to the determination of assuming the character of a near relation to the individual in question, and of concealing from Ashmont his real birth and parentage. It was likely that by these means, a greater freedom of intercourse would subsist between them ; and the event justified the expectation : the two young men soon became exceedingly intimate.

The approaching separation of Arthur and Mr. Middleton made so many arrangements necessary to complete a transfer of accounts to other hands, that, though Arthur had removed from his uncle's house, it was impossible for him to think of leaving the country at that period. During this time, Shenstone and he had ample means of improving their acquaintance. Arthur took delight in the society of one who, by his own account, had passed some time in ——shire, and with whom he could dilate on the perfections of his intended, and deplore the untoward circumstances, which caused their separation; and to George, though the subject was in a certain degree painful, there was still a melancholy pleasure in hearing those praises lavished on one to whom he was still ready and willing to devote his existence.

Amongst the engagements entered into by Mr. Middleton, there was one of a peculiar and delicate nature with a Dutch merchant, the conduct of which affair had been entrusted to Arthur. It was highly important to Mr. Middleton's interests, that whatever might be the result of the transaction (the seat of which was to be in the Corea), he should have the earliest possible intelligence of it; and in order that no unnecessary delay should take place, it had been arranged that Arthur was to go out and meet the Dutch vessel at a given island in those seas, she being bound to various other ports, previous to her return to Bombay; amongst others, to Nangesaki, the Dutch settlement in Japan. This agreement had been made some time

previous to Mr. Middleton's quarrel with his nephew, and the period now drew near when Arthur originally was to have set sail in search of the desired intelligence.

Aware that this affair was one that could not with prudence be intrusted to a person not conversant with the transactions which had given rise to it, and that for this reason his uncle would feel particularly embarrassed in the choice of a person qualified to undertake the management of the business, he considered it due to the kindness with which he had been treated up to the period of their unfortunate rupture, to offer to fulfil the engagement he had entered into during the epoch of their intimacy.

To his communication to this effect, he received the following answer :

" Sir,

" It is my opinion that by proposing to fulfil your engagement with regard to the Corea business, you act like a gentleman : I am sorry your understanding should not keep pace with your good breeding. Had it been otherwise, it is probable you would not have been fool enough to refuse the hand of a fine girl with a good fortune, for the sake of a penniless English Miss. The Jessy will be ready for sea in a week's time. Go along ; and if possible come back rather wiser than you went.

" I am Sir, your obedient servant.

" JOHN MIDDLETON."

Arthur could not refrain from a smile when he showed this curious specimen of polite correspondence to George Shenstone, proposing to him at the same time to accompany him in the expedition. Shenstone assented, and the two friends immediately began their preparations for a voyage which must necessarily consume a considerable portion of their time.

On the day preceding that which was fixed upon for their departure, Shenstone called upon his friend, requesting him to take charge of a sealed packet he held in his hand.

"It is of consequence," said he, "that this packet should be preserved. I have a duplicate of it in my own possession, but for greater security I should consider myself greatly obliged if you would retain this one in yours. I cannot tell, no one can tell, whether I shall return hither alive, though I do not own to any more than an ordinary presentiment of evil. But be the event what it may, I have but one request to make; namely, if I die, that you will open the packet, and fulfil the injunctions you will find in it. If I live—but that contingency speaks for itself, and we can discuss that matter at our leisure."

Arthur willingly agreed to Shenstone's request, and the two friends separated to meet the following day on board the *Jessy*.

The vessel was of considerable size, and calculated to lessen the great miseries of a voyage to those for whom sailing for its own sake has little or no charms. But Arthur was not one of these, and delighted in

the prospect of the various places that, in the course of so long an expedition as that which they had in view, it would be necessary as well as agreeable to visit. After passing the island of Ceylon, the *Jessy* was bound through the straits of Sunda to Batavia, at which place they expected to hear tidings of the Dutchman of which they were in search.

There was, however, one drawback to the pleasure of the voyage. The captain of their vessel, a man named Hawkins, was speedily discovered to be morose, and impracticable to a great degree, obstinate and brutal towards those who were under him, and ill disposed in any way to accommodate his passengers, or to minister to their convenience or pleasure. No source of contention arose between Bombay and Batavia; and having prosperously arrived at the latter place, they received the information that the Dutchman had touched there after a prosperous voyage, and having taken in the necessary stores, proceeded on her course with every prospect of a favourable voyage.

In process of time the *Jessy* put to sea, with the same favourable prospect as to wind and weather before her. But Hawkins, who had hitherto been awed, by his slight acquaintance with the two young men, and his scanty knowledge as to the degree of impunity with which he might exercise his love of tyranny and his taste for making himself disagreeable, into treating them with tolerable civility, finding that both Shenstone and Arthur were quiet men, disposed in general to be satisfied, and well inclined to practise

those duties of charity, described under the head of "seeking not their own," nor "being easily provoked;" in short, whose motto was, "any thing for a quiet life;" began now to feel a longing desire to show them some of his power, and to revenge himself upon them for the little relish they evinced for his society. The man, from the character which has been given of him, being necessarily an innate blackguard, was consequently no very suitable companion for his passengers, and it must be confessed that they sought his society no more than was absolutely indispensable.

Mortified at the slight, and under no apprehension, that his offensive behaviour to Arthur would be seriously taken up, or visited with any severity by his employer, of whose quarrel with his nephew he was aware, he determined to practice no restraint upon himself, but to "shew these d—d precious specimens of gentility," as he was pleased to designate them, "that if they did not choose to be pleasant with him, he would be d—d if he would take any trouble to oblige them." A series of petty annoyances, therefore, was commenced against them, with the view of forcing them to come with humble petitions to himself for their removal, to which he had predetermined to turn a deaf ear. For instance, fully aware of the grievance to a passenger of washing the decks at an undue hour, he gave orders that at half-past two o'clock in the morning that operation should in future commence. On the first day of this new arrangement, Arthur, who was comfortably nestled in his hammock, and fast

asleep, was suddenly awakened by a tremendous scrubbing, and a noise resembling nothing less than the fall of a rock close over his head. He jumped out, and seeing Shenstone wide awake :

“What on earth is this uproar?” said he.

“They are washing the decks, I suppose,” answered Shenstone.

“Washing the decks at two o’clock in the morning? Impossible! Some accident must have occurred to occasion the tremendous crash we have just heard?”

“Make yourself easy,” rejoined George. “Nothing more has happened than that Mr. Hawkins, with whom I suspect we are no favourites, has determined for that reason that we shall enjoy no more than three hours sleep in the night.”

But Arthur could not be persuaded; and getting out of his hammock, he mounted the deck, where he was greeted with a brisk north-west wind, under which they were sailing, and which, in consequence of the limited quantum of clothes incidental to gentlemen unexpectedly roused from their slumbers in the middle of the night, was anything but grateful at that particular moment, however desirable in every other point of view. Shivering with cold he approached a man busily employed on his knees, scrubbing with all his might.

“Did not I hear a spar fall with a tremendous crash just now?” said he to the sailor,

The man looked up,

"I am sure I can't tell what you heard, sir," said he.

"Have you met with no accident?"

"Accident, sir? No, none."

"Then what was that loud noise I heard not five minutes ago? You must have heard it as well as myself."

"I did not hear no particular noise, sir. It might have been one of the guns dropping down, we lifted her up for to clean the deck underneath her; but she's a slippery devil, and contrived to get out of our hands as we were a heaving of her up, and so came down not quite so softly as we makes her to do sometimes."

By this time Hawkins himself had found his way on deck, blustering and swearing at the men for making such an uproar; for, contrary to his intention, he had himself been awakened by the untoward downfall of the gun. Though proof by habit against the ordinary operation of cleansing the decks, he would have been a fit companion to the Seven Sleepers of the oriental tale themselves, had he slept through the din occasioned by the abrupt contact of the piece with the deck. Provoked at being caught in his own snare, though inwardly chuckling at the sight of Arthur, shivering in his scanty attire, he immediately guessed that he had been brought upon deck by the same cause which had caused his own appearance there, and addressing him with a sneer, he "hoped he had slept well, and that the noise had not disturbed him."

Arthur well nigh laughed in his face at such a question, to a man whose appearance betokened having hastily quitted his berth in spite of cold, and wind, and darkness. To his remonstrances against the new practice which had induced their meeting at so undue an hour, Hawkins turned a deaf ear, talked of duty, service, discipline, early hours, until Arthur, in disgust, crept back to his crib to get through the remaining hours of the night as best he might.

Nor was this the only mode he discovered of annoying his passengers. He would give them bad food, and barely a sufficiency. He would contrive to discover what things were least grateful to their palates, and then give secret orders that their table should be most frequently furnished with such ; meeting all their complaints either with complete indifference, or with consummate insolence. But subsequently, his obstinacy and excessive spirit of contradiction led him into a disaster which he had abundant occasion to rue for the remainder of his existence.

For a considerable time the *Jessy* had sailed under the influence of remarkably fine weather. The wind hitherto had been invariably in the right quarter, and it was impossible to have been more completely favoured by fortune than had fallen to her lot ; but once passed the Lakayo islands things had assumed an altered aspect. The wind changed, and for four days they encountered a severe gale from the N. W., which drove them very considerably out of their course.

It is probable that the long continuance of fine weather in giving him the security of speedily joining the Dutchman, had induced Hawkins to neglect the precaution of taking in an additional supply of water and provisions, from the last place at which they touched; an instance of neglect and want of forethought highly censurable, as it was obvious that, even should they join their companion precisely at the moment they anticipated, it was to the last degree unlikely that she should have a surplus sufficient to minister to the necessities of another vessel. Nor, on the diminutive and insignificant island which they had named as a rendezvous, was there the slightest probability of their being enabled to re-victual. But Hawkins, who, in addition to his other merits, was also possessed of that of avarice, trusted to the chance that all things would go on perfectly smoothly, and that no back of any kind would occur; in which case he calculated that he should be able to reach the last place at which they had touched on his return to Bombay, before his victualling should be expended, and that he might thus pocket the surplus money which had been most liberally awarded to him, allowing for the least favourable contingencies that could possibly occur. This unfortunate gale, however, entirely deranged his projects and disorganized his ideas. It had begun to blow precisely on the day that they might legitimately calculate on the possibility of reaching the island where they were to meet their consort; but they were now driven out so far to the eastward, that on the

wind abating, they found themselves nearly a thousand miles out of their proper course, their provisions scanty, and the nearest land the islands of Japan, the shores of which, it is well known, no ships of any other country than Holland, by the customs of that singular nation, are permitted to approach.

A consultation was accordingly held on board the *Jessy* as to the best mode of proceeding. The gale had considerably abated, but still blew from the west ; and there was no question but that they must beat up to windward, and repair their lost time as best they might. But the provisions were so nearly exhausted that there was little hope, without the strictest economy, of their lasting until they should reach a place where they could refit. The point under discussion, therefore, was, whether they should, in defiance of the customs of the inhabitants, endeavour to procure what they wanted in the Japanese port of Nangesaki ; or, putting the whole ship's company on a very reduced allowance, endeavour to gain a more friendly harbour, in the event of missing the Dutchman of which they were in quest. Shenstone and Ashmont, who had been reluctantly admitted into the conference by Hawkins, were clearly of opinion, that the latter was the most prudent course to be pursued ; and no sooner was the captain apprised that such was their opinion, than he immediately determined to adopt the former. The Dutch vessel, he said, on not finding them at the appointed place, would certainly have resumed her original course, which was to Nangesaki ; the *Jessy* in

all probability would meet with her in that port, and under the protection of her flag, no difficulty would be made to the *Jessy's* entrance into the harbour, should the Dutchman be unable to supply her with necessaries.

"Indeed" added he, pointing to his guns, "if there should, I'll soon shew them the difference, and teach them how they dare gainsay the entrance of an Anglo-Indian merchant-man into their rascally ditch of a harbour."

That an imperfectly armed merchantman should wilfully dare the batteries of a powerful nation, wedded to its prejudices, in the hope that it would make an exception in favour of an obscure and unknown vessel, was an act of folly and madness; not to mention that the chance of finding there the Dutch vessel, to whose protection and convoy they trusted for admission, was so remote as to warrant no plan whatever being built upon the contingency, much less one the failure of which would be attended with such manifold risk.

But our two young friends were wholly in the power and at the mercy of Hawkins; and no course was left open to them but that of the most patient submission they could command. The *Jessy* was accordingly steered for Nangesaki; and Hawkins was constantly to be seen pacing the deck, telescope in hand, in the hope of catching a glimpse of the Dutch sail, whose appearance was to be his justification for the mad and dangerous scheme he had adopted; but no such friendly sail appeared, and the *Jessy* made the

port with no other title to admission than her own hardihood and impudence. Shenstone and Ashmont once more conjured him, ere it was too late, to adopt their former suggestion; their passage from the point at which they had last held a consultation had been so rapid, owing to a change of wind, that by persevering in the system of economy they had begun, it might still have been possible to reach a more friendly port ere their provisions were expended; but Hawkins was obdurate. He swore he would not be dictated to, that he was master of the vessel, and was willing to undergo the responsibility of the deed; a poor consolation to those whose existence was risked, and to whom it was very immaterial on what individual rested the responsibility of the result!

The harbour of Nangesaki is one of remarkable difficulty of entrance. The Dutch merchant ships are always towed in by row-boats, and it is considered impossible to enter under sail. Arthur, aware of this fact, warned Hawkins against endeavouring to effect an entrance; but Hawkins affected to disbelieve him, and steered straight for the harbour, saying, that as they could not descry the Dutch vessel out at sea, she was probably in port, and he was determined he there would endeavour to find her. By a most singular chance, he did contrive, without any damage to the ship, to enter the harbour, and on a sight so unusual as that of a British and an armed merchantman within their sacred precincts, the Japanese immediately flocked to the vessel in boats, imagining that she had

suffered some considerable damage, and been forced into Nangesaki by stress of weather to repair, on which occasions they are invariably kind, even to those nations with whom they decline any commercial intercourse.

But when, on examination, they found that no damage had been sustained, and that there was even a sufficiency of provision to last them for a considerable time, they changed their tone, and decidedly, though civilly, invited the captain to depart. Hawkins, encouraged by his successful entrance, and by seeing no immediate preparation for hostility, assumed a blustering attitude, demanded fresh provisions and water, and ordered out of his vessel those who had brought him the invitation to depart, at the same time knocking out his tompons in token of defiance.

The natives immediately left the ship; and Hawkins exulted in having succeeded, as he thought, in bullying the natives. In the course of the evening he was boarded by several Dutch merchants, who earnestly advised him to comply with the injunctions of the Japanese, and to quit the harbour with all speed. The infatuated man still obstinately refused to listen to reason, when, to his amazement and dismay, at day-break on the following morning he beheld the shores lined with at least 14,000 well-armed men, with a force of artillery not to be despised; and ready, at the word of command, to pour into him a volume of musketry, which at his short distance from land could not fail of being eminently destructive. Paralysed with

fear and confusion, he gave a hasty and incoherent order to the crew to heave their anchor and prepare for departure. But the indignant natives, furious at their commands being braved and held in derision, without giving him time to put his tardy compliance with them into execution, immediately saluted him with a volley, which, in addition to doing great damage to the vessel, picked off five of the crew, and severely wounded George Shenstone, who was standing on the deck.

"Return their fire!" shouted Hawkins to one division of his men, whilst he exhorted the others to redouble their efforts to get under weigh.

In the disabled state of the ship, this manœuvre became a matter of serious difficulty; and ere it could be accomplished, a second volley was poured into the *Jessy*, which shot away her rudder and a great part of the rigging, and laid Hawkins on the deck with a tremendous, if not fatal, blow.

But in this awful state of affairs relief was fortunately at hand. In the confusion of the untoward engagement between an obstinate captain of a merchantman and an infuriated Asiatic people, it had not been observed that the wished-for Dutch vessel, had quietly entered the harbour in the usual manner. On seeing the *Jessy's* fearful predicament, the Dutch Captain lost no time in sending a boat on shore to negotiate a cessation, and to apologize for the insult offered to the majesty of the Japanese nation. At this opportune intercession they ceased their firing, and gave him

permission to send boats to remove from the *Jessy*, which was fast sinking, all the disabled and others who had fallen victims to the misconduct of Hawkins, together with their effects, on board his own vessel, the *Springbock* (*Antélope*.)

On examination of Hawkins's wound, it proved to be of so serious a nature, as in all likelihood to render amputation necessary. Shenstone's, though severe, and requiring considerable care and attention, was not likely to prove of lasting injury to him. They all found an acceptable refuge in the *Antelope*; and its hospitable captain, Vandermeer, hastened on shore to mediate with the exasperated Japanese, and to obviate the evil results which might accrue from the rash and mad temerity of the now disabled Captain of the *Jessy*.

CHAPTER XV.

'Tis he—how came he thence? What doth he here?

LARA.

THE design of Arthur's voyage having, owing to this unforeseen event, been entirely frustrated, there was now no course left open to him, but that of returning to Bombay in the *Antelope*. That vessel, however, was to remain some little time longer in the port of Nangesaki; and Arthur, who had fortunately

escaped unhurt from the late conflict, determined to devote a portion of that time to visiting the very remarkable island at which they were detained*.

It is a singular fact connected with this extraordinary people, that, though strictly debarred by their own laws from any intercourse with European nations, (the Dutch only excepted, and even with them their relations are of a very guarded and confined description), they have attained a degree of civilization greatly exceeding that of the Chinese, and in some respects even surpassing that of many, if not most nations of Europe. There exists at Amsterdam a collection of Japanese models which evince the high state of perfection to which the manufactures of that country are brought. In that collection are to be found specimens of coins, drawings, and furniture, illustrative of the general habits and condition of the enormous mass of refined civilization which exists unthought of, and almost unknown to Europe, except through the medium of certain articles of a black and

* Incredible as the following account of Japan may appear, it was nevertheless told to the author by a gentleman who had passed ten years of his life in that country in a mercantile capacity, and who is consequently well acquainted with the manners and customs of the nation. The collection spoken of is the property of this gentleman. A similar incident to that which is recorded of the *Jessy*, did, in fact, happen to an English man-of-war in 1807, with this variation, that the ship of war in question had time to escape. The remaining details, together with their lamentable result as concerned the Japanese government, are strictly true according to the above-mentioned authority.

yellow composition, which bear the name of the country in which they are fabricated, and in which ancient maiden ladies chiefly take delight. There are also models and drawings of mills, trades, houses, maps, mats, playthings, &c. all executed in that country; and as regards the models, with a degree of perfection in the workmanship of them, which is rarely seen in our own country, although we pride ourselves upon the superiority of our powers in that respect over the rest of Europe. The nicety, precision, and delicacy of the workmanship of the tables and other furniture, which also form a part of that collection, would indeed shame our best performers in that line. The drawings also evince the same superiority over their neighbours the Chinese, whose total contempt of perspective is so glaring and so ludicrous, and they appear extremely faithful representations, both of the human figure and of landscape.

It is well known that the privilege of trading thither is enjoyed by the Dutch exclusively, in consequence of some services rendered to the Japanese by that nation, the discovery of some conspiracy which involved the fate of the Empire. But even they are not permitted to enjoy their exclusive privilege without considerable restrictions. Whilst on shore they are confined to the factory, which is situated on an island, connected with the main land by a bridge; they may not pass into the interior, nor even into the city of Nangesaki, except by special permission, on which occasion they are accompanied by a guard;

neither are they permitted to bring a woman on board, much less to allow one to land on the island.

The only opportunity which a Dutchman can have of seeing the interior of this extraordinary nation, is on the occasion of an embassy to the capital city, Jeddo; and as, very opportunely, one of these was to be sent up during their stay, Arthur contrived, by passing himself off to the Japanese as one of their allies, to obtain admission amongst those who were attached to the embassy. Shenstone, whose wound still confined him to his cabin, could not be of the party.

The journey from Nangesaki to Jeddo, is abundantly interesting. To an European eye the prodigious magnitude of that capital is astonishing. It is situated on a lake and river; its diameter about eighteen miles, and its population two millions. The Emperor's palace alone is said to equal the whole town of Amsterdam in size; and the time occupied by Arthur and his companions in progressing from the walls of the city to the palace, was three hours. The immensity of the population in the city may be illustrated by the fact, which, on enquiry, Arthur ascertained to be correct, that in Jeddo alone there are constantly resident sixty princes, each with a suit of three or four thousand men.

Nor did the laws of the country form a subject of less interesting investigation. The police is excellent; and the government, though a severe despotism for the nobles; who are in constant and onerous attend-

ance on the court, is mild and excellent for the inferior classes, who are much attached to it. The complete and entire subjection of the nobles is remarkably evinced by their custom of submitting, without a murmur, to the commands of the sovereign, on comparatively trivial occasions, to rip themselves up, with their wives and families; and often on the occasion of any untoward event, of which the ministers were by any means entitled to the blame, whole families have been commanded to destroy themselves in this manner, and the injunction obeyed, without its being a question either of the slightest opposition on the part of those to whom it applied, or of animadversion on that of the lookers-on. As an instance of this barbarous custom, so unworthy the degree of civilization to which in other respects that nation has arrived, the governors of the town, with all their families, were, in consequence of Hawkins's mad attempt upon the port of Nangesaki, invited to punish themselves for the insult he had offered them, by inflicting this frightful and summary mode of death upon themselves, which invitation was received as a distinguished mark of favour, and instantly complied with without a murmur.

On the return of Ashmont to the Jessy, he found his friend retaining little further effects from his wound than a debility in the limb.

The unhappy Hawkins had paid a more severe penalty for his obstinacy and folly; namely that of remaining for the rest of his life *minus* an arm and a

leg, the amputation of both of them being, on further examination, deemed imperatively necessary to the preservation of his life.

In a short space of time they set sail for Bombay, whiling away the tedious hours of a long voyage as best they might, in discoursing on the events of their last.

Shenstone was now able to pass the greater part of his time on deck; and under the renovating influence of the sea air, he hoped rapidly to regain that strength of which he was for a moment deprived.

One day as the two friends were standing together near the helm, one of the cabin boys, a lad of about twelve years old, who had been confined from illness, and on that account rarely appeared on deck, walked slowly by the place on which they were standing. On a sudden Arthur beheld Shenstone turn deadly pale, and tremble in every limb. He fixed his eyes on the lad, and catching Arthur by the arm, said:

“Who—what—who is that boy?”

Arthur much alarmed, inquired if he were ill; but George hid his face in his hands, and dropping on a bench, reiterated his question, “I am not ill,” he said, “nothing ails me; but, for mercy’s sake!—that boy—who is he?”

Entirely at a loss to divine the sudden cause of his agitation, Ashmont for the purpose of satisfying his friend, immediately inquired the name of the lad, and informed Shenstone that it was Montreville.

“It is then as I thought,” he muttered and gasped

for breath. For a few minutes he was silent, and appeared overpowered with emotion ; but presently assuming a mastery over himself, he earnestly requested Arthur to send the lad to him. He appeared intelligent, and readily answered the questions which were put to him, although the agitation of Shenstone was such as to cause some embarrassment to the child.

"Your name I am told is —— Montreville?"

"Yes, sir."

"Whence do you come?"

"I was born in North America."

"Are your parents still alive?"

"Alas! No sir; I have neither father nor mother."

"Poor lad!" said Arthur, "and at this distance from your native country, so young and with no parent? Who placed you in your present situation?"

"I have an aunt at home, sir, and she it was who made a sailor of me, but not in this ship. I would much rather have staid at home with her and sister Anne, but she told me I must go to sea?"

"And why was she bent on sending you to sea?"

"Because, Sir, she said that she could not provide for me, and I must shift for myself as well as I could. And she told me that, as father and mother were both dead, I could expect no better, and that we ought to be very much obliged to her for taking care of sister Anne; for one stranger child in the house was quite enough."

"And was she unkind to you then?"

"Oh, she was not kind to me! I believe she was

angry because I cried so much at leaving sister Anne, and because I asked so often not to be sent to sea. I am a big boy now, and do not cry, but I am very sorry when I think of sister Anne so far away, and aunt so cross to her!"

This artless tale moved the compassion of all its hearers; but Shenstone's emotion was so excessive, and the change wrought in his countenance so striking, as again to call forth the alarm of his friends, who dreaded the re-opening of his wound, and that his sufferings would recommence. To their often-repeated inquiries he answered, "No, no, I am well. Let me listen to that boy;"—and then presently, "Ask him,—ask him—of his father and mother—the time—of their death."

"How long ago did you lose your parents, my little lad?" inquired Arthur.

"'Tis a long while ago, Sir; I was but a little boy then, only seven years old, but I remember it well."

"Do you know the manner of their death?"

"No, sir, not rightly. They were away from home when it happened. A great company of gentlemen came to father's house in the woods, to take him a journey, and mother wanted to go too, because she said aunt would take care of us. So she went; and we never saw either father or mother again after that. We waited and waited, and watched and watched, a long, long time; for when they set out, they said they would be back in a few month's time; but a whole year passed away, and they came not.

Then aunt said she would go to the coast, where the gentlemen lived who had stopped and taken father and mother away from home, and perhaps she might hear something of them. So we went, and sister Anne came with us."

"And what did you hear about your parents there?"

"They told us a sad story! They said mother had fallen sick and died on the journey, and that father had been drowned. They said they knew no particulars, and that the only person who had seen father last was gone away. So we were obliged to content ourselves with what they told us, but we felt very unhappy indeed!"

"And how long after this were you sent to sea?"

"About three years, sir. When aunt heard of father's and mother's death, she said she would keep me as long as she could. But I suppose she could not keep me any longer than that; for she soon began to grow very cross, and said she was poor, and at last that I must go to sea; and so to sea I went."

"And in what ship were you first placed?" asked Arthur.

"An English merchantship touched at the settlement, and as they were in want of a cabin boy, they took me along with them. We sailed for England, and after that for a Dutch port, I don't remember which; and Captain Vandermeer, made an exchange, I believe, with our captain of some other boy; so I was put on board the Springbock."

"His statement is quite correct," said the captain.

"Having had occasion to see young Montreville on board the merchantman, I was so much pleased with his appearance and behaviour that I prevailed on his captain to allow him to change berths, to whom, as he was to remain some time in harbour, the loss of the boy would be of little present inconvenience. And I must say, that during the two years that he has been with me, I have never had reason to find fault with him, and I am glad to meet with this opportunity of bearing witness to his good behaviour."

The poor boy coloured high, and looked pleased and ashamed at the encomiums passed upon him; and the gentlemen who had heard his simple story rewarded him with substantial tokens of their approbation. George alone sat pale and abstracted, and seemed scarcely aware that his recital was finished.

The likeness of the boy to his father had first attracted Shenstone's notice, and the tale he had just told brought back so vividly to his recollection the events of his former life, that for many days subsequently his habitual melancholy was increased. The novelty of the objects with which he was surrounded, the variety of countries he had visited, the late busy events in which he had been concerned, and above all the consciousness of the earnestness with which he had long since deplored his errors, had contributed in a great degree to erase from his mind those sad reminiscences of his early years; but the sudden re-appearance of this boy, whom, together with his little sister, he had seen in his infancy with those whom he had so griev-

ously wronged, now friendless and an orphan, torn from his home, and thrown upon the wide world to seek that existence which his father might, had he lived, have procured for him under more favourable circumstances,—this evidence of misery inflicted upon a third unoffending individual, was calculated to revive, in one so sensitive as Shenstone had become, the image of past horrors with a reality most painful, and to open again wounds which even yet were but partially cicatrized. It was many days ere he regained even his wonted degree of cheerfulness; his physical powers were to a certain degree affected by the violence of his emotion, and the excitement caused by all that he had heard, produced some return of uneasiness in his wound, which contributed, as well as its cause, to retard his progress towards a return to his previous state of mind.

In the meantime, the interest he evinced in the lad was such as to excite the surprise of the entire ship's company. He would constantly send for Montreville to his cabin; he took pains to instruct him; he was careful of his health, which, though the boy was active, enterprising, and intelligent, was somewhat delicate; and he treated him in all respects as a fond father would treat a first and only child. To Arthur's expressions of surprise at the sudden fancy he had taken for this boy, and to his urging him to account for the predilection, he merely replied that he had been acquainted with the lad's father, during his residence in North America, and that the destitute situation in

which he was placed, and his personal merits, were amply sufficient to create an interest in his favour. Nor did the young Montreville appear ungrateful for the kindness shown him; he soon became sincerely attached to his benefactor, and looked forward with delight to the close of his voyage, when Shenstone had promised to adopt him as his own child, and to endeavour at an early period to enable him once again to join his little sister Anne, on whom his affections were so strongly placed, and to whom his wishes chiefly tended.

CHAPTER XVI.

To thee the love of woman hath gone down,
Dark flow thy tides o'er manhood's noble head,
O'er youth's bright locks, and beauty's flowery crown

MRS. HEMANS.

For many days the Antelope pursued her homeward course with speed and safety, for the breeze was at once so steady and so favourable, that the captain was enabled to spread to it every extra yard of canvass which his sail-room contained, at least so long as the sun was still above the horizon. At the approach of night, however, he invariably shortened sail, and on these occasions the crew, wearied perhaps with the prosperous monotony of the day's voyage, dis-

played considerable activity in the execution of the captain's order, emulating, as far as their comparative strength of numbers would permit, the rapidity and precision with which such manœuvres are performed on board ships of war. Among them, the young Montreville was distinguished for a catlike activity which called forth the admiration of his comrades, but was witnessed with very different feelings by the friend who took so strong an interest in his fate, and felt such anxiety to procure his safe return to the sister for whom the boy professed an affection so touching.

One evening something had gone wrong with the top studding-sail boom. Young Montreville was perched at the extremity of the yard busily employed in setting matters to rights, (though by no means a part of his duty in his ordinary capacity), whilst Shenstone and Captain Vandermeer were watching him from the deck.

"It is lucky, after all, Mr. Shenstone," said the Captain, "that the boy's friends sent him to sea; he was made for it. It does my heart good to see a lad run so nimbly along the yard."

"You look upon this with the eyes of a sailor," said Shenstone; "I, on the contrary, though I have performed many voyages, am nevertheless so thorough a landsman that I had rather see that boy exposed to almost any degree of real danger on land, than watch him in the performance of such duties as he has just now been executing; though I believe, nay know, that

there is no danger at all in the performance to the active and experienced."

"None now, certainly, with a light breeze like this. Why the urchin might stand on his head on the truck! But the boy is certainly venturous, and as the season is drawing near when we may look for rougher weather, I think I must keep him below a little, at least till we have passed the Straits."

"Promise me that you will do so," said George, with an eagerness which would have surprised any one not accustomed to the earnestness and apparent warmth of feeling which occasionally broke through the restraint of his habitual melancholy and reserve.

The promise was given, and Montreville received with surprise, and prepared with reluctance to obey, the particular orders of the captain, that he should on no account go aloft without special permission.

In the precautions it takes, how little does human foresight sometimes avail!

As the vessel neared the Straits of Sunda, the navigators no longer dared to avail themselves of the full influence of the breeze which still favoured their progress; her weight of canvass was considerably reduced. Glasses, which had long remained unemployed, were now directed from the mast head, in eager search for the first indication of land in the horizon, and the fear of coral reefs and shoals kept the best hands employed with the deep sea lead in endeavouring to find soundings. As the interest which attends the expected making of land in such seas as those of the Eastern Archi-

pelago increased; the heavy splash of the lead and the recurring chant of the seamen became more frequent. This most necessary operation was one of great interest to Montreville, and though it required a strength rather beyond his years, and he was therefore not to be trusted with its execution, he endeavoured unceasingly to obtain the requisite instruction from professors in the art. One man in particular, perhaps the most able and practised of the crew, took the boy into especial favour, and used occasionally to diversify his lesson; to the great delight of his pupil, by exhibiting a feat which required some strength and dexterity, namely the flinging the lead over the main yard-arm.

The breeze had somewhat freshened; the course of the Antelope lay some points nearer to the wind than had hitherto been the case; the table in the main cabin, on which George Shenstone was leaning, in gloomy abstraction, gave visible token by its inclination, that a change had occurred either in the direction of the wind, or of the vessel. It was a change of little consequence to the interests of any concerned in the voyage; for ships, by some strange propensity of their nature, difficult of explanation to landmen, travel nearly as fast through the water when the wind is apparently doing its best to blow them out of their course, as when that same agent is urging them in the very direction they wish to pursue.

There was a sudden bustle upon deck; that description of noise of pattering feet, and a rush of many in

one direction, which speaks of danger or accident, even before the human voice can be raised to specify the occurrence, or give utterance to the first emotions of the spectator. Then rose the fearful cry of "A man overboard!" That cry which comes as loud and thrilling from him who has seen danger and death, in all their various shapes, as from the most sensitive and unhardened professor of the arts of peace; which by the intense eagerness of the various tones in which it is uttered, and the effect which it invariably produces on those to whom it is addressed, tells us that human affections, and sympathy with our kind, linger in the sternest bosoms, unextinguished by the habits of observation, the endurance, and the infliction of human suffering.

It frequently happens on such occasions, that the behaviour of the highest trained company of a ship of war does more credit to their humanity than to their discipline; and even the cry of fire near the magazine is hardly a higher trial of the coolness and obedience of a crew, than the fearful call above mentioned. It is no disgrace then to the company of the Antelope, that there was more of haste than judgment, more eagerness than order, in the actions on which the life they rashly crowded to save, depended. Amongst those who rushed up the ladders from below to reach the deck, Shenstone was one of the foremost, and his first question to the man at the wheel, almost the only one who had not quitted his post, was, "Can the man swim?"

"Man!" said the sailor, "it is the boy! I am afraid he is no swimmer, sir."

With something like a scream Shenstone rushed to the vessel's side, where Montreville's instructor, he of the deep sea lead, was endeavouring with more eagerness than expedition, to clear away the ropes by which the boat was suspended.

"A knife! will no one hand me a knife?" he roared out as Shenstone passed. Shenstone hastily held out a clasped-knife, and was passing onward, when the Captain, who was beginning by voice and example to infuse something like order into his crew, thinking he was about to jump into the boat, said:—

"For Heaven's sake, go below, sir. You can be of no use, and we are doing all that can be done."

"I shall soon be out of your way," said Shenstone, and as he spoke, he sprung on the taffrail, closed his hands over his head with the action of a practised swimmer, and the next instant disappeared beneath the waves. He soon rose again, and was seen striking out in the direction of the vessel's wake, with an energy and spirit apparently so little diminished by his comparatively disabled state, as to give hopes that, however useless might be his efforts for the preservation of the boy, his own life would yet be saved.

The boat was at length lowered; but in the brief interval, the ship had made fatal progress from the scene. Those who were not immediately employed in backing the sails, and checking the course of the

ship, remained on the poop, straining their sight to catch a glimpse of those who were now engaged in that struggle for existence, as dreadful to contemplate as to act. Twice the captain caught a momentary glimpse of Shenstone's head, and shouted to the boat's crew, to direct their course. At length, though the object was no longer visible from the ship, it appeared that the rowers by desperate exertion had neared it; for the two foremost shipped their oars, and the man in the bow stood up with a coil of rope in his hand, apparently in the act to fling it to the swimmer.

"They are saved!" was the cry on board.

Alas! the man with the rope still held it coiled in his grasp, and the rowers began once more to paddle like men who had no definite object in their motion, and long they remained in this position. At length the man in the bow himself resumed his oar. Slowly and steadily the boat was rowed back to the ship, and in deep silence its crew ascended the side of the vessel. They had indeed been near attaining the object of their exertions. Shenstone was yet striking out faintly with one hand, the other fast clenched in the long hair of the boy. Almost within reach of the rope, his ebbing strength had failed him, and both had disappeared for ever.

No class of persons are more disposed than sailors to entertain the tenet of predestination; and those on board the *Antelope* did not fail to remark that the well meant care of Mr. Shenstone for the boy, had

tended to accelerate, if it had not positively originated his fate.

"If he had been allowed to go aloft," said they, "nothing would have happened. It was idleness that made him take to heaving the lead for his amusement; and just as the ship lurched, the poor lad overreached himself, and in he went."

Thus reasoned the crew of the *Antelope*; and who shall deride their argument?

But, if such were the reasonings of the sailors, such their debates on the causes and effects of the late calamitous results, not so Arthur Ashmont. Overwhelmed with grief at the sad fate of his friend, he stayed not to reflect on the changes in the order of events, which might have averted the misfortune he deplored. Satisfied that all human power had been exerted to save them, he bowed to the decree of Omnipotence, which had not in its wisdom thought fit that their efforts should be crowned with success.

In process of time, and by the influence of that all-healing power, the poignancy of his regret began to diminish; but the remarkable interest taken by his friend in the stranger boy, and his agitation on the lad's first being made known to him, would sometimes cross his mind, as a striking peculiarity in the character of George. The reasons he had alleged for the emotion and interest he had evinced, in Arthur's judgment scarcely accounted for them.

There was an attraction and a charm in the society of Shenstone, which, notwithstanding his habitual

melancholy and reserve, were wont to win him the hearts of all those who were in intimate relation with him. Like his friends in England, Arthur had entertained a strong feeling of affection towards him; but, unlike them, or I should rather say unlike Alice Graham, who with the quick-sightedness of female penetration had discerned the minutiae, the detail (if I may be allowed the expression) of the character of her friend, whilst perhaps she overlooked its more decided features,—unlike her, that same melancholy and reserve had failed to strike Arthur as attributable to any previous circumstances, with which he was unacquainted; he simply considered them the constitutional inclination of his mind.

Shenstone's former explanation with Alice Graham, their often repeated conversations relative to his past deeds and present sufferings, had doubtless contributed to sooth his mind and show him the path to that peace which the world cannot give; and there had been consequently a calmness and quiescence in his deportment, which, though far from meriting what is usually understood by the term "good spirits," was free from that despondency and gloom which, in the social intercourse between man and man, so materially interfere with their comfort and goodfellowship.

CHAPTER XVII.

My own flesh and blood to rebel !

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

THE Antelope entered the port at an early hour in the morning, and in the afternoon of the same day Arthur presented himself at Mr. Middleton's door. An interview between the two was unavoidable, in order that Arthur should report to his uncle the information in his power, relative to the mercantile transactions in which he had been engaged for Mr. Middleton's service ; as also to account for his protracted absence, and the fate of his vessel the Jessy. This duty performed, it was Arthur's intention to set sail for his native country on the first opportunity.

In answer to Ashmont's request to know if his uncle were at home and willing to see him, the swarthy individual who appeared at the door, immediately put on what is usually, called by our neighbours, the French, a "*visage d'événement* ;" and indeed it must be confessed, though they are our natural enemies, we have no phrase that so well renders the peculiar expression of physiognomy it denotes.

"Sahib no be seen now," said the man.

"Is your master at tiffin ?" said Arthur.

"No, Sahib no eat tiffin now."

"What! not eat tiffin? He is ill then, I fear."

"No, Sahib no ill, yet no eat tiffin. He stay in room all day, he cry sometimes, he oftener get in rage, he no see nobody."

"What is the meaning of this? Has any accident occurred? Are his daughters well?"

"Miss Jane, Miss Louisa quite well; me can't tell how Miss Anne do, because not here; so massa cry and rage."

"And where is Miss Middleton?" said Arthur.

"Me can't tell. She run off yesterday with Colonel Maton."

"Miss Middleton eloped with Colonel Maton! And when did this occur?"

"Yesterday! and ever since Massa cry and rage, and no eat tiffin any more."

On receiving this information Arthur retreated, with the resolution of requesting an interview with his uncle, by letter, on the following morning; when the ebullition of feeling, which appeared by the servants account to prevail, might possibly have subsided.

This Colonel Maton was a young officer who had long been attached to Anne Middleton, and who was one of the six whom Mr. Middleton boasted of having rejected for her. His reasons for including that gentleman in his veto were totally inexplicable; for, not only was he unexceptionable as to character and station, but was also likely to remain in India for an indefinite period. Caprice alone had determined his

rejection ; as, indeed, it usually did most other matters of which Mr. Middleton had the direction.

On inquiry of his acquaintances in Bombay, into the circumstances of the case, it appeared that, shortly after Arthur's departure, and in consequence of his quarrel with his uncle, whose anger and unmeasured language had given complete publicity to the circumstances of it, Colonel Maton, in the hope that pique, or resentment, or some other equally adequate reason, might have operated a change in his favour in Mr. Middleton's sentiments, took that opportunity of renewing his proposals for his daughter's hand, being fully empowered by the lady to do so. But on this occasion, Mr. Middleton's bad passions would not serve his turn, and the lover was rejected as unceremoniously as before. Colonel Maton, indignant at this treatment, determined no longer to be the sport of such injustice and caprice, and prevailed upon Anne to consent to a private and clandestine union. Measures were taken accordingly, and the day preceding that on which Ashmont arrived had been selected for the marriage to take place. Anne Middleton left a letter for her father, imploring his forgiveness for the step she had taken, and confessing her long preference for the man she had chosen ; at the same time reminding him that she was now no longer a child, but fully competent to judge of that which was most likely to contribute to her future happiness ; adding that in her husband her father must gain a dutiful son, and would not lose an affectionate daughter.

This letter, instead of appeasing her father's wrath, or even of softening his displeasure, had the contrary effect of inflaming both. Accustomed to rule in his own house with a despot's sway, to consider his daughters as slaves, only a little less humble than the humuntoos, rhamaswancees, kissinchumdtis, &c. &c. &c., with which his dwelling was peopled,—to be braved by these same daughters, whom he considered as created for his especial convenience, was considerably more than his irascible temper could endure, and for a while his rage was so great that few of his servants dared approach him. Arthur's visit having occurred during the continuance of the paroxysm, the khitmutgar whom he addressed, would not run the risk of acquainting his master with his arrival at such a moment, and therefore wisely affirmed that "Sahib no see nobody."

On the following day Arthur despatched a note to his uncle, acquainting him with his return, and requesting the favour of an interview. To this communication he received a laconic verbal answer in the affirmative.

He had hardly entered his uncle's room, in obedience to the summons, than Mr. Middleton, manifesting a feverish anxiety to tell the news and to obtain the solace of a condolence, apparently forgetful of the difference, that existed between him and his nephew, broke out into mingled accents of anger, provocation, and annoyance.

"Have you heard what has happened? Anne, my daughter Anne——"

"I am acquainted with the circumstance," answered Arthur.

"Well, and would you have believed it possible? My daughter Anne! By Jove! Upon my soul it is too bad—there's no parallel to it! At her age too; not like a child of sixteen. My daughter Anne is three-and-thirty if she is a day! To run off with a rascallion in uniform! I hate the fellow!"

Unwilling to enter on the subject of his cousin's delinquency, Arthur here profited by a momentary pause to mention the subject of his visit; but he was quickly cut short by his uncle bursting out—

"Don't plague me with a long story about the Jessy and Hawkins now; I don't care a fig for either one or the other. I have not half done with this confounded runaway."

"I was anxious," said Arthur, "to change the conversation; in the conviction that, as the subject was one in which I am not implicated, and which must necessarily be highly disagreeable to you—"

"Disagreeable to me! to be sure it is d——ah disagreeable to me, or how should it be otherwise? But you are a pretty fellow to talk of not being implicated in this business—the whole business is your fault."

Arthur began to think his uncle had lost his reason with his temper.

"Yes, your fault; you need not stare. If you had chosen to marry her, instead of pinning your faith upon an English Miss, all this would not have happened."

"The event which has occurred, sir," continued Arthur, "convinces me, that, had I possessed the inclination to accede to your wishes on that subject, it would not have been in my power to do so. Your daughter would certainly not have consented to a marriage with me, when her heart was already given to another."

"How often am I to tell you that is all stuff? I should have settled that matter; I have told you so five hundred times."

And, secure in the ideal possession of unbounded authority, the severe lesson he had just received seemed scarcely to have made the least impression upon him, nor shown him the futility of the principles which hitherto had been his guides in his intercourse with his family.

Arthur again endeavoured to lead his uncle to the subject, the discussion of which was the sole object of his visit; but not until Mr. Middleton had given yet further vent to his wrath against his truant daughter, could he be induced, at Arthur's urgent request, to lend, if not a willing, at least a tolerant ear, to the detail and events of the voyage his nephew had undertaken in his service. Arthur's recital of the transactions, in which Hawkins had played a part so fatal to the ship under his command, and so ruinous to his employer, by degrees turned the stream of Mr. Middleton's wrath into another channel; and ever and anon he broke out into such gentle apostrophes as "D—d rascally blackguard!" "Confounded villain!" "What

the devil! Foundered my vessel, the Jessy! Lost me a thousand pounds by his delay! Devil take the fellow! But he has lost an arm and a leg, that's one comfort!"

"I believe Hawkins has repented as bitterly as man can do, of the action which brought about so much mischief," said Arthur.

"I dare say he has, indeed. Most people repent losing an arm and a leg through their own folly. He has no repentance for my loss of a thousand pounds, I'll warrant. However," added he, calling up a benignant smile, "I must say you have done well for me, my lad, at any rate; and though it must be owned you treated me and my daughters devilish ill before you left us, I am willing to forget it. Come, let us make it up, and be friends—shake hands."

And Arthur suddenly found himself on the best possible terms with his uncle—all his heinous offences forgiven, and himself once more received into high favour. Before the end of his visit, and after having been overwhelmed with civilities, Mr. Middleton sidled up to him, and with more embarrassment than was usual with him, began—"You have not changed about Jane, eh? Jane's a fine girl! has not absconded yet. Your English flirt is a devil of a way off. What should you think of it?—named after your mother, you know. What should you think of it, eh?"

Arthur, not a little indignant at hearing Alice termed his "English flirt," and in despair at this renewed attack, was beginning to resolve in his mind

how best it might be parried, when, to his great relief, Mr. Middleton said—"But we will not talk of that matter at present—you will come to, by and bye, I dare say—folks can't go on for ever thinking of the same girl, (between ourselves, I have been d—sh sick of Mrs. North this long time, though you'll not mention it), particularly when it is question of changing so much for the better; for I'll be bound my Jane will beat your English Miss hollow, when they come to be compared."

Having executed his commission with his most extraordinary uncle, there was now no longer any occasion for protracting his story; and, as at the close of his visit he took leave, Arthur inwardly determined that no other opportunity should be offered Mr. Middleton of exercising his matrimonial mania upon himself and his unfortunate cousin, and that their first interview since his return should be their last. Their sudden reconciliation would, indeed, seem to hold out some hopes that the original object of his excursion to India might possibly be answered; but experience had taught him the utter vanity of putting trust in one so entirely the sport of his passions, and so completely emancipated from the control of either reason or justice. He wisely preferred returning to his own country, and by redoubling his efforts, endeavour to make up, by close application and unceasing labour, for the time he had unfortunately spent in India in the fruitless pursuit of a permanent and more speedy independence.

His first care, on leaving his uncle's house, was to make diligent inquiries for the first ship bound for England, and, to his great delight, was informed that in a week, at furthest, a vessel would sail in which he was welcome to a passage.

However unfortunate Arthur's Indian scheme had proved to him, however little desirable his leaving India, in a prudential point of view, the prospect of returning to England afforded him great consolation, though he had hoped that his return thither would have taken place under far happier auspices. He had been absent nearly two years. He had formed but one intimacy in his own sex, found but one individual of kindred feelings; that link was now forever severed. With the other sex he was likewise unconnected by any tie beyond that common bond of acquaintance and good fellowship which must ever exist in small societies wherever there has occurred no quarrel to unloose it. His constancy to Alice Graham had remained undiminished; not even the charms of Anne Middleton, the despiser of the sex, nor of Jane Middleton, the rejector of the four, had for a moment succeeded in turning the current of his fancy, still less that of his affections, from the image of Alice Graham; he, indeed, realized that wonder of the male creation, a constant lover of two years standing!

CHAPTER XVIII.

LEONATO. Well, niece, I hope to see you one day fitted with a husband.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

BUT during the long time that we have lost sight of Alice Graham, what has befallen her and her's? Has no third hero been made the victim of her charms? Has Julia's jealous wrath not been again called forth? Has Mr. Graham's ingenuity in discovering the secret history of events taking place under his eyes, not again been at fault?

Surely, in the course of two long years, much must have occurred worthy of record! Alas! for the interest of my novel, no! The end of the second year found the three individuals we left at the close of a former chapter, still at Graham Court; the head of the house still occupied with John Bailey's farm and successor, still discussing their comparative merits; Julia still, (unwillingly, it is true) sharing her sister's laborious efforts to instil into the minds of her village *protégés*, those virtues so difficult of attainment among the poor, rectitude and prudence, and, through the propitiatory aid of bodily comforts, to induce them to listen to her wise saws and sage instructions. Unfortunately, these employments, though highly creditable

in real life, are sadly dull when imparted in the guise of a novel. It is true, that in the course of these two said years, accidents did certainly occur; for, as in these days no well regulated family in the country can exist without a pony-carriage, so every well regulated family meets with a certain number of accidents resulting from that agreeable, though insecure mode of locomotion. As a specimen of those which sometimes befel our young ladies, I may mention the following.

The sisters were taking their accustomed drive, Julia enacting the part of charioteer, but entirely absorbed in the recital of some interesting fact, which had come to her knowledge.

Ceasing to bestow that attention upon her ponies which these unreasonable little creatures have a bad habit of requiring, they consequently deviated so materially from the beaten track as to attract the notice of Alice, though herself much engrossed in the story she was listening to. "Julia! my dear Julia," exclaimed she, "we are going against the tree!" And as the word "*tree*" was uttered, crash went the pony carriage wheel against a large but low stump left as a seat by the side of the drive. The ladies were thrown out, and the carriage upset; but as neither Arthur Ashmont, nor George Shenstone (as is the rule in novels), were at hand to succour the lady of their love, and as their rescue devolved simply on the man seated behind, and roused from his slumbers by the shock,—and as, moreover, that event was productive

of nothing further than an agony of fear on the part of Julia, and a considerable stock of bruises on that of both the young ladies, I am justified in saying the incident is scarcely worthy of insertion.

It is useless to deny, although the honour of the fair sex may be implicated in the avowal, that damsels having attained the age of three or four-and-twenty, when the first heyday of delight in balls and ball gowns, in partners and small talk, is beginning to be on the wane, are generally, if not always, inclined towards matrimony. Indeed, it sometimes happens, that at the early age, when girls are first emancipated from the thralldom of the school room, when most ignorant of man and his ways, and seeing in marriage merely what all must come to, and the sooner that end is attained the greater the distinction, long ere they are satiated with the pleasures of the gay world, they are ready and willing to accept a *good match*, however undesirable he may be in other as essential respects. The young creature has no dislike to him (no particular preference, it is true), but the man is a good sort of man; and this is quite sufficient. Perhaps the ladies may be right. One of a batch of four or five sisters, would in all probability be dubbed an absolute idiot to decline an offer on such terms, to reject the opportunity of forming an eligible establishment, purely because she had no particular preference or other suitor, nor any particular disposition to marry. Nevertheless, unjust though it may be, I am inclined to find fault with those daughters who are so ready

and willing to escape from the paternal mansion, unless indeed, as sometimes though rarely occurs, that mansion be not a happy one.

In my opinion there are more objections to a disparity of age, than are commonly admitted. The other sex having the unenvied privilege of chusing their own time for changing their estate, do not usually take that step until they have sown their wild oats, and until the pleasures of the world have lost their charms.

Let us suppose the case of a respectable man of thirty years of age, united to a pretty lively girl of seventeen; the husband marrying for domesticity, sick of the world, desirous of a snug fireside, or of a quiet slumbering evening after a day's labour in some public office, fondly hoping, now he is in possession of a wife, to avoid the necessities of seeking in balls, parties, or clubs, that society, without which, in a mitigated form, he found he could no longer exist; the wife marrying at seventeen without any "particular preference" for the steady man of thirty, with a strong inclination for amusing herself, not yet having acquired her husband's taste for home and quiet.

One of two things must happen:—*she* must do violence to her inclinations, by staying at home while yearning to be out; or *he* must resign himself, with what patience he may, to chaperon his young wife to the haunts of dissipation, he had hoped were forsworn for ever.

Such may prove some of the disadvantages of

early marriages. Doubtless they are trivial compared with many others which sometimes conspire to embitter the married state; and where good temper, rectitude, forbearance, and unselfishness prevail, in the united character of the two, they cease to be of any serious import. Where little self-control has been practised by either party, and where indulgence of tastes and whims is considered a right, the consequences may become more important.

At the mature age of three or four-and-twenty, the particular disadvantage to which I have referred, does not in all probability exist. Unquestionably, woman (not the child of sixteen or seventeen) is formed for a wife and a mother. At twenty-four years of age, she has had sufficient time to become acquainted with the animal, man; she has learnt to discriminate between those vices which belong to the race, and those which are peculiar to the individual. She need no longer be attracted and seduced by easy address and agreeable manners; she is enabled to judge from her own observation of the character of her suitor; and unless blinded by immoderate love, may form a tolerably accurate calculation, as to the chances for her future happiness. The matrimonial inclination may probably be increased too, by the knowledge that in the polite circles, devout hopes are breathed that another year may not elapse, and still leave half a score of specified young ladies unprovided with a lord; that loud lamentations are ever and anon raised, that "Hymen and his saffron robe," should we long have

passed them by. Nay, even that their fathers and brothers kindly express their unfeigned desire to be rid of their daughters and sisters, even as we have seen the incomparable Arthur scrupled not to do, with reference to Henrietta Ashmont and Mr. Mer-sham.

Whether for these causes or for others, the matrimonial inclination had attained in Julia Graham's bosom the very highest pitch. So weary of the society of her father and sister, so sick of Graham Court, its occupations, duties, and pleasures was she, that on each succeeding year when she bade adieu to its precincts, as they left it for the metropolis, inwardly did she resolve that on her the blame should not rest of returning thither unmarried.

In London, indeed, "the wish was sometimes farther to the thought," that in more than one quarter there existed intentions of a certain description, which would probably ere long be brought to an issue.

"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife."* Mr. D——, one of this genus, and "his own son," had been a constant object of interest to mothers and daughters. But then Mr. D—— was a philanderer, and hitherto had hovered from one lady to another, paying to two or three at once, such attentions as, had they fallen to the share of one, would have entitled the fair one to consider herself the vic-

* See *Pride and Prejudice*, vol. I. p. 1.

tim of ill usage, were they not followed up by serious consequences.

Julia had had her share of this gentleman's attentions; and, in common with sundry others, believed herself the most favoured of the favoured. In addition to his other attractions, Mr. D—— was in the habit of entertaining the town with balls, dinners, fêtes of all descriptions. A ball at his house was looked forward to in the gay world, *vu* the circumstances of his case, with infinitely more pleasure than the thousand and one other notices of such events; howbeit his house was little better than many others, his company not more select.

On the 20th of May it was announced that a ball was to take place at the house of this favourite of fashion, with the (to some) additional merit that it was to be *costumé*.

Straightway commenced the organization of quadrilles; meetings were called at divers houses; Maradan, Devy, Claret, &c. were summoned, and the great question agitated whether the costumes should be Swiss or Spanish, Turkish or Tartan; if Swiss, what canton—if Spanish, what province. Then followed hot debates among the ladies; yellow did not suit the dark, red never yet became the fair; one was too tall for such high feathers, her head would be eternally in the chandelier! another was too short for such very long waists; one said they should wear rouge, it was allowable in a costume; another, cut to the heart, told the melancholy tale that her father would not

listen to such an idea, and it would be very hard, if one were to wear it, that they should not all do so; still worse, if it were permitted to all of them, her unfortunate self alone excepted!

However, after innumerable difficulties, the costume was settled and ordered; and in process of time each young lady, in addition to a pretty new dress, had the advantage of possessing a grievance; for had *she* had her own way, *this* would have been so, and *that* would never have been *here* instead of there, which every one must allow would have been far prettier, much more convenient, and a great deal cheaper.

But however interesting this matter might be, other more interesting matter transpired in a few days. One evening as Julia was dressing for dinner, her maid, who was fond of making remarks to lighten the labours of her vocation, began:

"I understand, Ma'am, Mr. D——'s ball is to be more beautifuller than ever this time."

"Indeed?" said Julia. "What have you heard of it, Bates?"

"They do say, Ma'am, there's to be fire-works in the garden, and the ball-room is to be all hanged with artificial roses, and some talks of a transparency of some kind, with one of the letters of the alphabet in the middle of it, a nitial I think they calls it."

"An initial," said Julia, "indeed? And do you know, Bates, whose initial it is?"

"I fancy Mr. Williams was saying, Ma'am (that's the groom of the chambers, Ma'am, a nice civil young

man he is, quite pleasant!) Mr. Williams was saying, I think, that it was a *hi*. (Lawk, Miss Julia! you are not a-going to put on that shocking ugly cap Miss Jones made you, this evening, are you? Don't pray, Ma'am, it really looks quite nunting. I don't know how it is, but Miss Jones really does make sad nunting-figures of all her caps, now; not at all fit for a lady of fashion to put on. Well, I'm sure! I don't know when I've seen such an ugly figure as this cap!")

"Well, Bates," resumed Julia, hoping to lead her back to the original topic, "and so you think it was the letter I?"

"So Mr. Williams said; Ma'am; but I caught a peep at it, and I thought it looked more like a *J*. Mr. Williams, however, certainly did say it was a *hi*. There's not much difference to be sure between the two letters, however."

"No," said Julia thoughtfully, "there is but little difference between the two letters; indeed, they are often considered one and the same."

"Yes, Ma'am, that is just what I was a saying to Mr. Williams. 'I said,' says I, 'I think we may make a pretty good guess who that's meant for,' says I. 'Yes,' says he, 'I think we may indeed. My master has good taste in the ladies. Mrs. Bates,' says he. 'Indeed he has,' says I, 'though I says it as should not,' says I. 'I am sure,' says he, 'I don't see no reason,' says he, 'why you should not say so, Mrs. Bates, as well as another,'" says he, (he is quite a civil pleasant young man, is Mr. Williams, Ma'am.)"

Mrs. Bates continued sometime her encomiums on Mr. Williams and the impending ball, but Julia's thoughts now dwelt only on the information she had received. She could scarcely conceal her satisfaction; here was delightful, palpable corroboration of her deliberately formed opinion; nay here was absolute proof that Mr. D—distinguished her in a peculiar manner. He gave a ball, and that ball was *costume*,—every one knew her remarkably good taste in dress; here was a delicate and indirect compliment;—his ball-room was hung with flowers,—the garden at Graham Court was famous,—evidently an allusion to it, and a homage to its merits.

There could be no question that these were nothing less than covert methods of announcing his final intentions; and lest any doubt could exist of the identity of the lady, he had actually provided a transparency with her own initial in the midst!

The result, therefore, of the ball was more than certain. The twenty-first of May would dawn upon Julia another creature, that day would see her an affianced bride. She was almost tempted to order her wedding clothes.

The following day Mrs. Bates's intelligence as to the "letters of the alphabet," was confirmed. Some of the *habitués* of Mr. D—pronounced it to be indeed an I, but none would venture even a surmise as to the individual prefigured thereby. Julia in conscious security and delight, sat by and sucked the grateful news, smiling inwardly and in derision at the conjectures of

the society, in which her name had not found a place.

Pleasantly and gaily sped the intervening days, visions of bliss and change floated in Julia's fertile brain, when lo! at one fell swoop their "baseless fabric" was dissolved, leaving not "a wreck behind." Two days before the looked-for fete, Mr. D—'s marriage was declared with Miss Isabella Dashwood. Julia fainted, and tore her hair, but Miss Isabella bought her trousseau; Julia went into strong hysterics, but Mr. D—, faithless, philandering, ball-giving Mr. D—, was married St. at George's.

Alas, poor Julia!

CHAPTER XIX.

Whom but to see is to admire,
And, oh forgive the word!—to love;
Forgive the word in one who ne'er
With such a word can more offend.

LORD BYRON.

The periodical arrival of Arthur Ashmont's letters was always anticipated by the Graham family with interest and delight. In the course of his correspondence, Alice had been apprised of his quarrel with Mr. Middleton and its cause, with George Shenstone's arrival, and with the intimacy which had sprung up between

them. She hoped much for George's peace of mind; in change of scene, and in a connection with one so well suited to him in every respect as Arthur Ashmont; his natural liveliness of temper and buoyancy of spirits, she trusted, would contribute to restore him to that cheerfulness and peace of mind; his long and bitter repentance entirely deserved.

Mr. Graham looked forward with pleasure to the period when he would gain a son by his younger daughter's marriage.

"They will be poor," thought he, "they will not be able to afford themselves a house; so much the better, they will live with me," and the kind-hearted old man, the affectionate father, hugged himself with the notion that his favourite daughter Alice would never leave him, and that Arthur would be unto him a son.

Julia too looked forward with satisfaction to her sister's marriage. She longed for the moment when Alice should cease to be upon what is vulgarly called "her promotion," and that the attentions which were now usually directed to her sister becoming no longer legitimate in that quarter, should the more freely be bestowed upon herself.

She had not yet succeeded in divesting herself of the idea that, had George Shenstone been aware of her sister's engagement, she herself would have participated more decidedly in those assiduities on his part, which she now considered had been unduly and unfairly monopolized by her sister, to the prejudice of Ar-

that, whom, on this occasion, she took under her special protection.

Ignorant of the peculiar nature of the intimacy between Alice and Shenstone, unaware that the former had assumed the office of comforter and consolator, she very naturally concluded that the intimacy could have no other source than in the highly improper flirtation that subsisted between them. She considered it due to her friend Arthur Ashmont to resent it, and the unhappy Alice had often since and previous to Shenstone's departure, been compelled to bear with insinuations of, and implied reproaches for, her infidelity to her former swain.

It must be confessed that to an indifferent observer Alice did appear to run some risk; but to you and me, gentle reader, who are in the secret, there can be no doubt that our heroine's heart was still in Arthur's keeping, and that, however akin pity may be to love, still in this case they were not united. Abstractedly, I question whether pity do not oftener breed friendship and interest than love (the passion); whether a woman is a whit more inclined to marry the man she compassionates, than the man she admires. Be it how it may in general, in the case before us the proverb was not exemplified. Alice Grahams fidelity to, and affection for, her affianced husband remained unimpaired.

By the next mail, for the arrival of which the usual epoch now drew near, Alice expected to hear the result of Arthur's quarrel with his uncle, a result which

she confidently expected would be followed by his speedy return to England. Accordingly, one morning at the breakfast table a well-known thick packet was put into her hands.

The unusually deep attention and the varying countenance with which Alice read, or rather devoured, the letters it contained, bespoke more interesting intelligence than was customary, and the quivering lip and swelling eye, as she proceeded, announced that there was more of pain than pleasure in their tidings. To her father's and sister's enquiries if there were evil news of Arthur, she replied,

"No, thank God! he is well and true; but he does indeed send me sad and melancholy tidings. Poor George Shenstone!"

"What of him?" eagerly interrupted Julia.

"He has been drowned," said Alice, "in an ineffectual attempt to save the life of young Montreville. Yes, indeed," added she, forgetting that she was not alone, "I see it all;" and she hid her face in her hands. "Poor, poor George!"

"George Shenstone drowned!" exclaimed Julia, and unable to restrain her tears, she burst into a fit of long and loud lamentation; whilst Alice, having once more perused the account of his death, handed the letter to her father, and turning her attention to her sister, endeavoured to quiet and console her. Sobbing, and through her tears, Julia said reproachfully to Alice,

"How could you send him off in that manner to

India, where he was sure to die! Every body dies in India; how could you do so?"

"Poor George did not die in India, Julia; he perished accidentally at sea. Do not accuse me of an event which I assure you I lament as sincerely as you can do."

"But he did die in India," said Julia in the same querulous tone; "what does it signify whether at sea or on shore? If you had not driven him from hence, this never would have happened. Oh, cruel, cruel!" And thus Julia continued to bewail the young man's unfortunate fate, to the great annoyance of her father and sister, who, both strongly attached to Shenstone, deplored his untimely end with a grief, if not so loud or so apparent as Julia's, at least as sincere and as deeply seated.

Arthur's letter contained an account of all that had befallen him, of the fate of the *Jessy*, the expedition to Jeddo, and the melancholy loss of his friend. The merits and perfection of Shenstone were strongly dwelt upon, and his loss bewailed as that of a brother. His remarks on the singularly melancholy disposition evinced by Shenstone, and its sudden increase on being apprized of the presence, and listening to the history, of young Montreville, were amply sufficient to acquaint Alice with the whole transaction. She saw in the extraordinary interest suddenly manifested by Shenstone for the boy, his anxious desire that, however fatal to the lad's parents his early vices had proved, in his altered character he should be enabled

to supply their place, by unremitting care and attention to foster those qualities of his mind which seemed already implanted there, and by an ultimate permanent provision for him, to atone, as far as in him lay, for those deeds which had been instrumental in casting him friendless and an orphan upon the wide world.

Poor George ! his good intentions were not destined to avail, his visions of atonement not destined to be fulfilled, his vices had been the direct causes of the destruction of the parents ; his virtues were not permitted to rescue the son from that death, which, as the sailors of the *Antelope* affirmed, would not have taken place, had the boy been left to his own devices, deprived of Shenstone's fostering care. The career of both was now forever closed ; Shenstone was departed to his long home, there to be brought to a reckoning for all the errors and crimes of his short life. If ever deep and sincere repentance, heartfelt and lasting contrition, have gone up a sweet-smelling savour to the Almighty throne ; if ever the unceasing exercise of every virtue during the latter half of a life have atoned for the sins and excesses of the first ; then may we hope that the Recording Angel has dropped his tear upon that page, and blotted it out for ever ; then, indeed, is our departed friend received up into those mansions of bliss, leaving behind him a glorious example, that "there is more joy over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance."

CHAPTER XX.

Thus let my memory live, my friends,
Thus ever think of me,
Fondly, kindly, yet as of one
For whom 'tis well to be fled and gone;
Or of a bird from its chain unbound,
Or of a wand'rer whose home is found;
So let it be!

MRS. HEMANS.

ARTHUR's preparations for his voyage were now begun and continued with vigour. In the course of the rummage which usually precedes any great migration of self and all worldly goods, his eye suddenly lit upon the identical packet with which he had been entrusted by George Shenstone previous to their embarkation on board the *Jessy*, and which he had agreed to open in the event of the, at that time, improbable death of the unfortunate young man. Until this moment the transaction had escaped Arthur's memory, and at the period of its occurrence, there was so slender a likelihood of such a catastrophe, that he had attached little or no weight to the circumstance.

His first care now was to fulfil his engagement, and with a heavy heart he broke the seal. The first

words that met his eye were addressed to himself, they ran thus:

"Should it be ordained by Providence that this packet be opened by yourself, the author of its contents will be numbered with the dead. Let not any motives, however pure, any feeling however honorable, deter you from fulfilling to the letter the purport of the documents it accompanies. Neither let this peremptory mode of entreaty shock or disgust you. Read steadfastly to the end, and then judge of the writer and his intentions. We have now been intimately acquainted for a long season. Our intercourse has been so unreserved as to convey a conviction that no two individuals can be more thoroughly conversant with the feelings and sentiments of the other. But although on your side I believe this complete unreserve to have existed, it is not so with me. There are, alas! many subjects connected with my sad history, that I dare not, cannot touch upon; many passages of my life known to but one individual in this hemisphere. Arthur, that individual is your future wife, Alice Graham. Start not at the name; you have no cause for fear. Alice Graham is true to you, and to you only. But though true to you, the kindly feelings of her heart, have not been ever shut out from sympathy with her fellows of either sex, from compassion for their vices, from interest in their well-being. I need not now fear to own the truth; the voice of a rival uplifted from the grave will have no terrors, nay will even disarm anger. Rival did I say?

Alas! I have been no rival to you. Arthur, fervently, devotedly have I loved Alice Graham. She pitied and consoled me; but my love could never meet with a return from such as her.

"Innocence and purity and perfection love guilt, crime, and remorse! No, to you she was ever true, to you and you alone. Happy, happy Arthur! Happy, for you are unstained by crime, unpursued by remorse! happy, for you are blessed by Alice's love! thrice happy, for shortly she will be yours for life! For Alice Graham's sake I first sought you; anxious, nay, jealous of her happiness, aware of the barrier that divided you, I resolved to judge for myself of your character, and according to the opinion I formed of your worthiness to possess a pearl of so costly a price, I determined to remove that barrier or not. I soon learned to love you for your own sake; I found you deserving of Alice's love, I deemed that her welfare might safely be trusted in your hands, and I resolved that that barrier should cease to exist.

"You have known but the latter part of my life. You are little aware of the stormy passages that have gone before; you little imagine that the friend you have chosen is tainted with every vice; that the man who has set himself up as a judge of your character, is himself sullied by every crime—nay, that accident alone has rescued him from an ignominious forfeiture of his life, to the offended laws of God and man. Could it then be possible, that Alice Graham should love such a man? Could it then be possible, that

those rumours which had reached you, and of which on my first arrival I discovered you to be aware—could indeed those rumours have any foundation in fact? I am indeed the man whose name has been coupled with Alice Graham's, and though on our first acquaintance I was desirous for both our sakes of concealing this fact from your knowledge, I have now no longer any motive for such concealment. Yes, Arthur, in life and in death, I am the devoted to Alice Graham, your future wife. To her I refer you for the details of my sad story; from her I first received peace of mind, such peace of mind at least as one of my stamp could enjoy. Cherish her, Arthur, doat on her as I have done, and that you may receive that summit and perfection of earthly bliss, your love returned, is the fervent prayer of your affectionate friend,

GEORGE SHENSTONE."

The astonishment of Arthur in perusing this extraordinary letter, may be more easily conceived than described. Shenstone, his friend and associate, sullied by every crime! Shenstone, whom he had been accustomed to look up to as the best of men, tainted with every vice, and rescued by accident alone from an ignominious death! Impossible! And yet how account for the fact he had thus solemnly stated? The idea of aberration of intellectual power was forbidden by the evidence of his strikingly able mind. His nice sense of rectitude—his exemplary moral conduct, his strong attachment to the duties pre-

scribed by religious faith, from which source he appeared to deduce every motive for action, dismissed the probability that he should, at any anterior period, have been regardless of them; at the same time, should such a case have occurred, should Shenstone have been betrayed into crime or even error, the very existence of these feelings in his mind would occasion a remorse so poignant as to account for the peculiarity in his character already described, and which had not altogether escaped the observation of his friend, and as such would contribute to the production of the foregoing effusion. For the solution of the problem, for the explanation of the mystery, he must trust to his future wife, to his lady love, and his original desire to meet her, was not a little enhanced by the interesting information she would have to impart.

But this letter was not the only document the packet contained; on unfolding a second and more voluminous paper, he discovered a will, duly signed, dated, and attested, the purport of which, on further examination, he found with amazement to be a deed, bequeathing to Alice Graham and himself, jointly, Shenstone House, and its surrounding estates, with the reservation only of a considerable legacy to each of his surviving sisters. Subjoined to this paper was a memorandum in Shenstone's handwriting, inscribed to Arthur, stating for his satisfaction, and in order that his delicacy should not be alarmed at the somewhat unusual course pursued by his friend with regard to his estate, that, with the exception of his sisters, he

had no relation in the world, and both of them were happily married in affluence. His estate was in his own power; but as a token of affectionate regard he had bequeathed to them the abovementioned legacy. The memorandum concluded with an additional exhortation to him to cherish and love his future wife, and an affectionate and touching farewell.

Thus, even in death, did George Shenstone minister to the comfort and happiness of his friends—thus was his boundless love for, and gratitude to Alice, apparent to the last, his strong and deep feeling of the errors of his former life, as present to him as at the moment when they were first demonstrated in all their naked blackness and atrocity. Let his ashes now rest in peace!

"He climb'd the dizzy steps of Heaven,
Thro' peril, toil, and pain;
O God, to us may grace be given
To follow in his train!"

Reader, you must be aware that little more remains to be said. One hero is no more; in the other is about to be embodied the only other remaining-alternative, namely,—marriage. Alice Graham is anxiously expecting him. In process of time, and in the common course of events they met; the unexpected change in their prospects and situation was disclosed, and the contents of Shenstone's packet imparted.

bly thought, if he thought at all, that he fulfilled the end of his existence, by passing it in this manner.

Alice's congratulations from her friends were abundant. All those who had witnessed the first growth of the mutual attachment between Arthur and herself conceived it incumbent upon them to offer their felicitations. Amongst these, the only one worth being recorded was that of Lady William Dallas, which will prove, that the few years which have elapsed, since we were last in company with her, have not made any alteration either for better or worse. Her letter ran as follows.

" My sweet Alice,

" I am so pleased to hear you are going to be married at last, and all owing to me too; for of course ~~you have not forgotten that I was~~ the person who first introduced Arthur Ashmont to you three or four years ago at Rome. Do you know that I always fancied something of this kind would occur between you? I don't know why, but I could not help it. I used to say it to William, and if you ask him he will tell you so. I don't know how it happens, but it certainly very often *is* the case, that when two young people of about the same standing, and both (as I must say you are) very nice people, live a good deal together, it certainly does very often happen, that they fall in love and marry. It really is very odd, but I have made the observation oftener than you would think for. But here I am running into a long

course of reasoning, and forgetting all the time to wish you joy! Shocking! I do wish you joy, my dear, with all my heart, and I think you have got a very nice husband. Between ourselves, I like him better than John; I always did; don't you? He has one fault though, and that you must cure him of:—he has not small talk enough, and I suspect he is rather absent. I have known him sit and look at me when I was talking to him, and not say a word; and when I have sometimes stopped, to see if he would say anything, one might almost have thought that he had not been listening to what I said, for he had not a word to give in return! He used to be very tiresome in that way at Rome; but I have not seen him for a long while now, and I daresay he is improved. But, for all that, he is a very nice creature, and when you have cured him of that fault, he will be perfect. I am very fond of him, and so I am of you, my dear Alice. Good bye; give my love to him, and to Julia too.

“ Affectionately yours,

“ H. DALLAS.

“ I am going to send you *such* a pretty present you can't think!

“ It is a pity somebody does not marry Julia, is not it? Don't tell her I said so on any account.”

Of Julia, I grieve to say, I have no wedding to narrate. The residue of her days was passed in single blessedness. She remained with her father until his decease, when Graham Court devolved to a distant male relation, the same gross injustice having been

practised on Julia Graham by her ancestors, as it is well known had been Mrs. Bennett's case, who feelingly declared that it was "the hardest thing in the world that Mr. Bennett's estate should be entailed away from his own children," and all in consequence of his not having, as *she* would have done, "tried long ago to do something or other about it."* In consequence of this "iniquitous affair,"† we find Julia later in life the possessor of a small house in Green-street, and a frequenter of card parties "before Almack's," to which last she now seldom betook herself. She had obtained "Brevet rank," i. e. had doffed the *Miss* for the *Mrs.*, having at the period of her father's death given up the point of matrimony, and assumed as near an approach to it, as that denomination can confer.

The frequenters of late London dinners in the highest of the summer season, should their route to their Amphitryon lie through Green-street, may sometimes have caught a peep at a comely lady, nicely attired in white cap and artificial flowers, grey silk gown, and blonde pelerine confined by the sash, seated in the centre of a sedan chair, gently rising and falling according to the motion of her chairmen's tread.

That comely lady must surely have been Mrs. Julia Graham, on her way to spend her evening at Lady Arran's card party "before Almack's."

* See *Pride and Prejudice*, vol. i. p. 95. † *Ibid.*

